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Cultures of Writing between Rome and Constantinople

MIRELA IVANOVA

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За Мама, която ми даде всичко

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This is also a book about language, and it would not have been possible without the brilliant language instruction I received as a graduate student. Mary Whitby

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Two parts of this book have appeared in print before. Parts of Chapter 2 first saw light of day as: 'Re-Thinking the *Life of Constantine-Cyril the Philosopher*', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 98 (2020), pp. 434–63. Parts of Chapter 5 appeared in: 'Inventing and Ethnicisizing Slavonic in the Long Ninth Century', *Journal of Medieval History*, 47 (2021), pp. 574–86. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewers of both, who helped make these better articles but also in turn improved this book and to both journals for letting me print some of these articles' findings here. I am also grateful to the Early Slavic Studies Association for awarding the latter their Article Prize in 2022.

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To quote the Gospel of Matthew (4:4), however, '(wo)man shall not live by (medieval historical) bread alone'. And this book is as much the product of the

vibrant historical communities I found myself in, as it is of the care, support, and intellectual stimulation of my loved ones. I have been spoiled when it comes to brilliant people. Rachel, Olivia, Beth, Justine, Xavier, Emma, Sarah, Dave, and Elspeth have each in their own unique way nourished, held, nurtured, supported, or challenged me. Jack has moved and inspired me. Kez has helped me be and become. Josh is a part of how I see the world. I am thankful and excited to share my life with you all.

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Finally, this book is dedicated my mother, who gave me everything. I am sorry that I have nothing better to give you back.

January 2023
Sheffield

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Note on Transliteration

Transliteration is a necessary evil when working across alphabets and languages, and it is always fallible and imperfect. The aims of my practice are firstly ease, and secondly consistency.

I have used the Library of Congress guide without diacritics for Slavonic when rendering scholars' names or titles of works in the footnotes and bibliography. This does leave some things unclear: 'u' represents both 'y' and the Bulgarian hard 'ъ'; 'i' represents both 'и' and the soft 'й'. It also often leads to rendering the names of scholars, especially from the Balkans, in ways that they themselves would not: Khristo instead of Hristo, Giuzelev instead of Gjuzelev.

When citing names in the main body of text or giving names to texts myself, I have opted for commonly accepted anglicised spellings for Slavonic proper nouns, partly because the alternative would be to choose to transliterate one national spelling over and above another. So, the reader will find Constantine-Cyril and Methodios instead of Konstantin-Cyril and Metoděj (Czech), Konstantin-Ciril and Metod (Slovak), Konstantin-Ćirilo and Metodije (Serbian), Konstantin-Kiril and Metodii (Bulgarian), Konstantin-Kiril and Metodij (Macedonian), or Konstantin-Kirill and Mefodii (Russian). But when citing the original publication in footnotes or bibliography, I have transliterated faithfully from the author's own language. So, one may find Methodios in the main text but Metoděj, Metod, Metodije, or Mefodii in a footnote.

For Greek I also use the Library of Congress guide when transliterating words or phrases, and I retain markers to distinguish between short and long vowels. When citing names or proper nouns in the main body of text or shorthand names I have given to texts, however, I have followed the transliteration of the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*: so Theodoros rather than Theodorus, Photios rather than Photius. When citing the original publication in the footnotes, I have rendered it as the author themselves did, should the reader need to find the publication in an inflexible library catalogue, so at times Niketas in the main text is found as Nicetas in a footnote.

Working across different scholarly fields and different textual genres also comes with their different practices of referring to primary sources. I do not claim to resolve the inconsistent practices across these, but simply to stick to the conventions of each field as I have found them and accept some inevitable inconsistency in my own approach. I usually refer to the editions of Greek-language chronicles and hagiographies, using the chapter numbers and line numbers assigned by their editors. Only if neither of these is available do I turn to page

numbers. I refer to the editions of Latin-language hagiographies using only the chapter numbers, as line numbers are far less frequent across Latin editions and rarely transferred into translations. When citing Latin-language annals, I use the year of the entry. I cite short Greek and Latin letters using page numbers only, but long letters usually are divided into chapter by editors, so I give those. For texts surviving in Slavonic, I use both chapter numbers and lines if available, and page numbers only if not.

When referring to a text which has been translated in the main body of text, I give both the edition and translation in the first footnote, and then simply refer to the text's title and chapter number henceforth to refer to both the original and translated text. However, when the text I am citing is central to the argument and is quoted at length in an indented quote, I give a separate footnote to indicate the source of the translation. Any indented English left unmarked is therefore my own.

Abbreviations

FGHB	*Fontes Graeci Historiae Bulgaricae*, 9 vols. (Sofia, 1954–94).
FLHB	*Fontes Latini Historiae Bulgaricae*, 5 vols. (Sofia, 1958–2001).
LBG	*Lexikon zur byzantinischen Gräzität besonders des 9.–12. Jahrhunderts*, ed. E. Trapp, 8 vols. (Vienna, 1994–2017).
LLP	*Lexicon Linguae Palaeoslovenicae*, 4 vols. (Prague, 1966–97).
LPGL	*Lexicon palaeoslovenico-graeco-latinum: Emendatum auctum*, ed. F. R. Miklosich, (Vindobonae, 1862–5).
LSJ	*The Online Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek-English Lexicon*, http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/lsj/#eid=1 (last accessed: January 2023).
MGH	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica*
MPG	*Patrologia cursus completus: Series graeca*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 161 vols. (Paris, 1857–66).
MPL	*Patrologia cursus completus: Series latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris, 1844–64).
SC	*Soldiers of Christ, Saints and Saints' Lives from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, eds. T. Noble and T. Head (London, 1995).
SV	*The Synodicon Vetus*, ed., trans. J. Duffy and J. Parker (Washington, DC, 1979).
TLG	*Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*

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Map The Missions of Saints Cyril and Methodius to the Slavs, 9th Century. The Map Archive.

Introduction

Few alphabets in the world are actively celebrated, none more so than the Slavonic. The alphabet and its legendary inventors, Cyril and Methodios, are commemorated annually on the Day of the Slavonic Alphabet and Culture on 24 May in the Orthodox world, and 5 July in the Catholic world, and statues, churches, schools, and streets bearing the brothers' names or likeness saturate the Central and Eastern European landscape.

This book offers a new reading of the invention of the alphabet and its implications. It is the first intellectual history of the earliest narratives of the invention of the Slavonic alphabet. What this means is that it approaches these texts as intellectual monuments which sought to make specific contributions to contemporary political contexts, and not as sources of historical fact to be assessed or verified. Its principal contribution is twofold.

The first argument takes up less space and concerns modern historiography.[1] But it is no less essential. I maintain that a critical engagement with medieval sources is not possible without a critical engagement with the history of scholarship which makes the texts we approach always-already read.[2] The relationship between politics, popular discourse, and medieval history in Central and Eastern Europe is stronger and more pertinent than elsewhere in Europe at the very least.[3] The day of the Slavonic Alphabet and Culture is often a large state- and church-funded national holiday (see Figure 1). National academies are frequently given

[1] 'Modern historiography' is here used to demarcate scholarship since the so-called 'rediscovery' of the key texts that form the body of this book by the first wave of nineteenth-century professional scholars, interested in scientifically revealing medieval Slavonic history. The local use of these texts within societies, prior to their extraction as medieval monuments to be mined for historical data, is what I consider the 'pre-modern', although perhaps better albeit clunkier terms are 'pre-professional-historical' or 'pre-modernist'. I take this distinction from the field of archaeology's divide between 'indigenous archaeology' and 'modernist archaeology'. See: Y. Hamilakis, 'Decolonising Greek Archaeology: Indigenous Archaeologies, Modernist Archaeologies and the Post-Colonial Critique', in D. Damaskos and D. Plantzos, eds., *A Singular Antiquity* (Athens, 2008), pp. 273–84.

[2] I have advocated for this elsewhere too, see: B. Anderson, M. Ivanova, 'Introduction: For a Critical Historiography of Byzantine Studies' in eds., *Is Byzantine Studies a Colonialist Discipline? Towards a Critical Historiography* (University Park, PA, 2023), pp. 1–38.

[3] See: S. Rohdewald, *Sacralizing the Nation through Remembrance of Medieval Religious Figures in Serbia, Bulgaria and Macedonia*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 2022), R. Daskalov, *Master Narratives of the Middle Ages in Bulgaria* (Leiden, 2021). This is similar to the use of Ancient Greece by the modern Greek state. For an excellent exposition see: Y. Hamilakis, *The Nation and Its Ruins: Antiquity, Archaeology and National Imagination in Greece* (Oxford, 2007).

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extra funding to produce anniversary volumes on medieval figures or events. In 2016, on the anniversary of the death of the Cyrillo-Methodian disciple Clement of Ohrid, the Macedonian Academy of Science organised an international conference in Ohrid which opened with a presidential address, followed by an address by the mayor of Ohrid, both of which feature in the subsequent academic publication.[4] In 2017, the Bulgarian state celebrated 1,100 years since the battle of Achelous (now Akheloi), where according to Greek chronicles, Tsar Symeon defeated Byzantine troops. The celebrations of this medieval victory included a historical re-enactment of the battle at a field identified as the battleground, and were attended by the Mayor of the Region of Pomorie, the Mayor of the City of Akheloi, and the President of Bulgaria.[5]

Medieval conferences are often politicised by their close interaction with the state. In 2016, the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Belgrade, Serbia was opened by a presidential address. The then president, Tomislav Nikolić, called upon international scholars to denounce the legitimacy of the state of Kosovo's claim to the monasteries in their territory, comparing the citizens of Kosovo to the 'infidels' ('неверника') of the Ottoman empire who conquered Constantinople.[6] This was filmed and screened on national Serbian television. The day ended with a reception at the presidential palace. The next congress, due to happen in Istanbul in 2021, was moved to co-hosts Venice and Padua in 2022, after Byzantinists' international outcry at the conversion of the Hagia Sophia into a mosque. The president of the International Association of Byzantine Studies, John Haldon, tried to single-handedly reverse this decision by writing a letter directly addressed to Turkish president Recep Erdoğan.[7]

The entry or attempted entry of various Central and Eastern European countries into the European Union has also affected the ways in which scholars have framed their medieval object of study. Since its 2013 entry into the EU, Croatia's medieval scholarship, for example, has begun to frame the region not as part of the Balkans or a Byzantine Commonwealth, but as the south-eastern frontier of the Carolingian (and therefore Western European) world.[8] Elsewhere, the word

[4] See: T. Fiti, ed., *Sveti Kliment Okhridski, 916–2016: Svecheno odbelezhuvanje na 1100-godishninata od upokojuvanjeto* (Skopje, 2017).

[5] '1100 godini ot bitkata pri Akheloi', 20 August 2017, https://offnews.bg/obshtestvo/1100-godini-ot-bitkata-pri-aheloj-prezidentat-na-chestvaniata-663233.html (last accessed: September 2023).

[6] T. Nikolić, 'Ugrozhena srpsko-vizantijska bashtina na KiM', 22 August 2016 (https://www.predsednik.rs/pres-centar/saopstenja/ugrozena-srpsko-vizantijska-bastina-na-kim) (last accessed: September 2023).

[7] John Haldon, 'Open Letter to President Erdoğan', 25th June 2020 (https://aiebnet.gr/index.php?gf-download=2020%2F07%2FLetter-v1.pdf&form-id=2&field-id=8&hash=fac6600d9f0982472ab4fb1d45c6a7fc10c7a8241e60ee53c6923412ff404f5f) (last accessed: September 2023).

[8] See: D. Dzino et al., eds., *Migration, Integration and Connectivity on the Southeastern Frontier of the Carolingian Empire* (Leiden, 2018), especially the discussion in the editors' afterword of how this new paradigm is ideologically charged, pp. 287–98.

Figure 1 Celebration of Saints Cyril and Methodios and the International Day of the Slavonic Alphabet and Culture, in Moscow, Russia, 2015
Sigwald/Wikipedia

Europe has become ever more ubiquitous in volumes on Cyril, Methodios, Moravia, and their disciples.[9] This will be elaborated upon throughout the book.

I argue that a stable and fossilised story can be found in the modern scholarship and popular common-sense about Cyril, his brother and companion Methodios, and the alphabet.[10] This has produced what Patrick Geary calls 'a moment of primary acquisition', a 'primordial moment' of the birth of Slavonic culture which exists almost 'outside the domain of history'.[11] In brief, this account sees the invention of Slavonic as an act which unified Slavs and liberated them

[9] P. Kouřil, ed., *The Cyril and Methodios Mission and Europe*: *1150 Years Since the Arrival of the Thessaloniki Brothers in Great Moravia* (Brno, 2014). The Bulgarian Academy's anniversary volume on Clement of Ohrid also stresses this new Europe-facing world view: S. Kuiumdzhieva et al., eds., *Sv. Kliment Okrhidski v kulturata na evropa* (Sofia, 2018), ('Saint Clement of Ohrid in European Culture'). On attempted re-Europeanisation of the Balkans and the shifting goalpost that is Europe more generally, see the excellent: D. Mishkova, *Beyond Balkanism: The Scholarly Politics of Region Making* (Abingdon, 2018); O. Dhand, *The Idea of Central Europe: Geopolitics, Culture and Regional Identity* (London, 2018). And my thoughts on this more specifically in: M. Ivanova, 'Review: *Beyond Balkanism* by Diana Mishkova', *Balkanist*, July 2019 (https://balkanist.net/beyond-balkanism/) (last accessed: September 2023).

[10] By 'common-sense', here and throughout the book I mean that which we consider self-evident and pre-given about the world and is therefore often left unstated explicitly. This common-sense is by no means coherent, but to the contrary most often contradictory. See: J. Rehmann, 'Ideology in Gramsci's Theory of Hegemony', in his *Theories of Ideology: The Powers of Alienation and Subjection* (Leiden, 2013), pp. 126–31.

[11] P. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton, NJ, 2002), pp. 156–8.

from others. It was achieved by a sacred brotherly pair, Cyril and Methodios, who were apostles to the Slavs and united in their mission to Moravia, a short-lived kingdom in modern-day Central Europe. After the expulsion of the Cyrillo-Methodian students from Moravia, the alphabet arrived in Bulgaria, where it was preserved by the Bulgarian state and especially its ruler Symeon (ca. 893–927) before making its way to the Slavonic speakers of the north-east, modern-day Ukraine, Russia, and the Baltics. I argue not so much that any of these individual statements about facts is wrong, as that they have been put together by combining sources with profoundly different agendas, to serve a wider, politically significant, and commonly accepted contemporary narrative about the invention of Slavonic. In doing so, I show that the coherent picture painted by modern scholarship is in fact a Frankenstein's monster, bolted together from texts which originally attributed quite different, often conflicting meanings to the elements which make up this supposedly unified narrative.

By identifying and disentangling the constituent parts of this common-sense narrative, this book is then able to excavate and critically assess the underlying assumptions that have permitted modern scholarship to forge these disparate parts into a supposed whole. These positions are rarely explicitly expressed or formulated in the works I cite. The teasing out of these positions and of how they manifest themselves in the scholarship of each text, is itself part of the intellectual-historical analysis of this study, and it is as much its purpose as it is to offer new readings of the medieval texts and new arguments about their relationship to the medieval past.

The second argument which takes up the bulk of this book is about medieval history and is alluded to in my title: that Slavonic was not invented once, but underwent a process of inventing and reinventing, in profound ways, over the course of its first century of existence, ca. 870–950. What I mean by Slavonic is intentionally broad and ambiguous. In part, I refer to the alphabets used to record Slavonic languages in the early Middle Ages. I want to encompass both scripts which survive from the period, since both Cyrillic and Glagolitic changed in their shape and use, and since our texts never specify which alphabet they are referring to when they narrate the invention. But this book also explores the change and reinvention of Slavonic as an ethnic, linguistic, and personal identity. Throughout the period under consideration, what it meant to be a Slavonic speaker and a Slav was also being contested, and our surviving texts testify to the diverse ideas and possibilities of the label.

So this book seeks to unpick these processes of invention, rather than examine a specific immutable object, whether that be the Slavonic script or a Slavonic ethnicity. It posits that the script, its inventor, Cyril, and his brother and companion Methodios, were all repeatedly reconceptualised. Quite unlike modern historiography, there was no settled hegemonic account of the invention of the alphabet in the ninth and tenth centuries, but rather a number of competing and

contradictory proposals produced in response to a series of fluctuating sociopolitical circumstances. Over the course of this period, a number of the key features of the modern narrative of the invention of Slavonic emerged in individual texts. But when they did, they emerged as specific responses to contemporary problems, and often at the expense of rather than as a supplement to earlier narratives. No medieval text bears the Cyril and Methodios story of modern historiography. But what they do offer us is a new history of the efforts of literate communities to bring about changes in their sociopolitical circumstances through the production of texts, and in particular through attempts to mobilise the new alphabet to concrete political ends. I refer to these efforts as 'cultures of writing' in the title to capture two things. The first is the inheritance of Greek and Latin written culture which fed into the early Slavonic-speaking translations and texts: much of this book is made up of analysis of sources and citations from Greek and Latin. The second is the creative efforts of the textual communities which produced my texts: namely, the cultures they sought to bring into being. Cultures of writing, therefore, here means both the written cultures one inherits and the real cultural practices out there in the world one seeks to produce.

In proposing this history of reinvention, I seek to shift the study about Cyril and Methodios away from the intra-national(ist) disagreements which have plagued historiography (was Cyril Bulgarian or Macedonian? Did the brothers translate into Czech or Slovak?), and to integrate the birth of Slavonic and the texts which narrate it firmly into the wider history of writing and its relationship to power in the early medieval world. This wider field, therefore, and not the concerns of nationalist historiography, informs the underlying assumptions about writing with which I have approached the sources of this book. I outline these starting points, and how they differ from scholarship on Slavonic in what follows.

Inventing Writing

One of the key pillars of scholarship on the history of literacy has been the understanding that new literacies are fragile, and have no guaranteed success. In a world where the technology of writing is already available, however small the reach of literacy, a new script has no internal drive. Separate from its situatedness in the sociopolitical landscape it is an empty signifier. To succeed, it requires some temporary alignment of the interests of various individuals, communities, and institutions which may otherwise have opposing agendas. Furthermore, no language requires its own, designated alphabet. Alphabets rise and fall much more readily than languages do.[12] These may seem like banal observations, but

[12] For instance, the Permian script was invented by the late-fourteenth-century saint Stephen of Perm, who was tasked with converting the Finno-Uguric Komi peoples of the utmost north-east

they are nowhere to be found in the scholarship on Slavonic, where the idea that the Slavs needed a Slavonic alphabet in the ninth century, has remained unquestioned, despite the fact that many Slavonic nations today use the Latin script.

A second observation central to literacy studies, and in particular the so-called 'ideological model' of literacy, which sees writing as embedded in social practices and structures, is the idea that writing itself is not inherently a *good thing*.[13] It is only as liberating or oppressive as its users. More often than not, and certainly in the Middle Ages when the custodians of writing were those with access to institutional power and wealth, writing was firmly integrated in and used towards maintaining existing inequalities. That is not to say that it could not be used for resistance in what Mark Amsler calls 'unruly textualities', but simply that it often was not, and one has to look carefully to find out.[14] This observation too, has bypassed scholarship on Slavonic, which has almost unequivocally accepted that the Slavonic alphabet was indeed a *good thing* for the Slavs. Diana Mishkova's apt summary of twentieth-century Slavonic historiography on the letters, for example, notes that it was widely accepted that 'the literature created in this script [i.e. Slavonic] was of a genuinely democratic character since the broad masses could avail themselves of it in their fight against class and national oppressors'.[15] So much is made clear in the relentless modern celebration of the inventors across Eastern Europe.

Throughout this book, I seek to resist taking this assumption for granted by assessing the various ways Slavonic speakers were evoked and caricatured in our earliest texts. Perhaps unsurprisingly from the vantage point of literacy studies, our literate authors' agendas (although they were Slavonic speakers themselves) did not always have the illiterate and subaltern Slavonic people's best interests at heart. By trying to move away from the medieval Slavonic ethnos or nation as unit of analysis, and towards more granular individuals and institutions, I argue

European regions of modern-day Russia. The new letters had fallen out of use by the seventeenth century, whilst the Permian language continued to be written in Cyrillic. See: Epiphanius the Wise, *The Life of Stephen of Perm,* in *Slovo o zhitii i uchenii sviatogo ottsa nashego Stefana, byvshego episkopom v Permi, sostavlennoe prepodobnym vo sviashchennoinokakh ottsom nashim Epifaniem*, ed. trans. Iu. Gribov et al., in *Biblioteka literatury Drevnei Rusi*, vol. 12 (St Petersburg, 2003), pp. 144–231.

[13] The 'ideological model of literacy' sought to replace the earlier so-called 'autonomous model of literacy' which saw the technology as an independent driver of profound social change. For the ideological model: B. Street, 'Introduction: The New Literacy Studies', in his ed., *Cross-Cultural Approaches to Literacy* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 1–21; S. Houston, 'Overture to *The First Writing*', in his ed., *The First Writing: Script Invention as History and Process* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 3–15, at pp. 5–7; J. Assman, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilisation: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 265–6. The older model can be found in the early work of Jack Goody, e.g. *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Cambridge, 1977); and in slightly weakened form in his later: *The Interface between the Written and the Oral* (Cambridge, 1987). See also: W. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London, 1988).

[14] M. Amsler, *Affective Literacies: Writing and Multilingualism in the Late Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2011), p. 29.

[15] D. Mishkova, *Rival Byzantiums: Empire and Identity in Southeastern Europe* (Cambridge, 2022), p. 221.

in Chapter 9, for example, that it was perfectly possible to be a Slavonic speaker *and* to resist or choose not to use the Slavonic alphabet in the ninth and tenth centuries, just as it is today, if Serbian, Bulgarian, and Russian young people's social media alphabet practices are anything to go by.

Finally, recent scholarship on the history of writing and literacy has tended to maintain a distinction between the histories of the practice of writing in early literate societies, and the myths recording the origins of various scripts. The two have often been collapsed in the study of Slavonic, so it is worth teasing them out. On the one hand, therefore, are studies of complex sociopolitical processes, involving multiple actors with different agendas for utilising writing and their written output in charters, documents, graffiti, and the like.[16] Such studies have remained attuned to the possibility that all the ground gained by a particular script can at any point be lost or reversed, as the social context in which this writing was embedded fluctuated.[17] This kind of pragmatic study which seeks to measure literacy or catalogue its spread is not the kind of study this book attempts, but it nonetheless has much to offer to those who are interested in such questions.

On the other hand, there sits the study of the pre-modern accounts of the origins of writing, which is this book's primary concern. These kinds of mythical texts are conspicuously lacking in complex and multiple agencies, fragility, and contingency. To the contrary, as societies reorganised their pasts to serve, explain, or represent their contemporary concerns, earlier processes of invention, adoption, and adaptation, became fossilised in what anthropologist Maurice Halbwachs has called 'figures of memory'.[18] In the words of Halbwachs, 'if a truth is to be settled in the memory of a group it needs to be presented in the concrete form of an event, of a personality, or of a locality'.[19] This is nowhere truer than in the case of the invention of alphabets or literacies more generally. The complex processes discussed above are often symbolised instead by an uncomplicated event and an individual inventor. In ancient Mesopotamia, amongst the earliest societies to record writing, a Sumerian text notes that the invention of writing was occasioned by an exchange of messages between Enmerkar, the lord of Uruk,

[16] Although in much of Western medieval historiography this issue has been frustratingly bogged down in a debate about the literacy of the state versus the church. Most recently, the importance of the 'state' has reigned supreme. See the seminal: M. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England, 1066–1307* (London, 1979). More recently Clanchy's thesis has been supported in scholarship that uses the label 'pragmatic literacy' for non-religious writing. See: I. Larsson, *Pragmatic Literacy and the Medieval Use of the Vernacular: The Swedish Example* (Turnhout, 2009); Đ. Bubalo, *Pragmatic Literacy in Medieval Serbia* (Turnhout, 2014); W. Brown et al., eds, *Documentary Culture and the Laity in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2013). See also: S. Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture in Early Rus, c.950–1300* (Cambridge, 2002).

[17] See for instance: J. Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilisation: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 265; T. van den Hout, 'The Rise and Fall of Cuneiform in Hittite Anatolia', in C. Woods, ed., *Visible Language: Inventions of Writing in the Ancient Middle East and Beyond* (Chicago, 2015), pp. 99–106.

[18] Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, p. 23.

[19] M. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago, 1992), p. 200.

and the lord of Aratta, which was too complex for the messenger to remember, so the ruler of Uruk put the words on a clay tablet.[20] In Plato's famous account in the *Phaedrus*, it was the Egyptian god Thoth who gave the King Ammon the first writing.[21] In al-Masudi's tenth-century Arabic account, most probably sourced from a much earlier text, the prophet Zoroaster created the letters used by ancient Persians.[22]

In the era of Abrahamic monotheism, as a healthy dose of scepticism towards the written word withered away, these kinds of legendary accounts needed only cosmetic transformation.[23] Multiple gods were replaced by various mediators of the one God, either scriptural figures or, in the Christian traditions, saints. In the ninth-century summary of Philostorgius' *Church History*, the fourth-century bishop Ulfila was sent to the ruler of the Goths by the emperor Constantnius II (ca. 337–61), and produced an alphabet for them into which he translated scripture.[24] In his fifth-century *vita*, the Armenian bishop Mashtots is tasked with inventing an alphabet by King Vramshapuh (ca. 389–417).[25] Whilst he is at it, Mashtots invents alphabets for Georgian and Albanian too. And in the ninth century, which concerns us here, the *Life of Cyril* records that Emperor Michael III sent Constantine-Cyril to the Slavs, and in course, God revealed the Slavonic letters to the saint.

Much like the alphabets whose origins they expose, these narratives are by no means necessary. It is not the case that all societies formulate figures of memory for the invention of their writing system. Whilst one can purchase a Mashtots t-shirt at most Armenian historical sites and at the Yerevan airport today, no single inventor or event dominates ideas about the emergence of the Latin, Greek, or even, despite its otherwise sacred association, the Arabic script.[26] Thus, as with the emergence and sustenance of the script itself, the way individuals,

[20] *Enmenkar and the Lord of Aratta*, in *Epics of Sumerian Kings: The Matter of Aratta*, ed., trans. H. Vantisphout (Atlanta, 2003), pp. 85–7.

[21] Plato, *Phaedrus and the Seventh and Eighth Letters*, trans. W. Hamilton (London, 1973), pp. 96–7.

[22] *The 'History of the Kings of the Persians' in Three Arabic Chronicles*, trans. R. Hoyland (Liverpool, 2018), pp. 87–9. On this see: K. van Bladel, 'Zoroaster's Many Languages', in J. Lowry and S. Toorawa, eds., *Arabic Humanities, Islamic Thought: Essays in Honor of Everett K. Rowson* (Leiden, 2017), pp. 190–210.

[23] L. Alexander, 'The Living Voice: Scepticism towards the Written Word in Early Christian and in Graeco-Roman texts', in D. Clines et al., eds., *The Bible in Three Dimensions: Essays in Celebration of Forty Years of Biblical Studies in the University of Sheffield* (Sheffield, 1990), pp. 221–48; G. Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature in Islam: From the Aural to the Read* (Edinburgh, 2009), esp. pp. 16–30.

[24] See: P. Heather and J. Matthews, 'The Life and Work of Ulfila', in their eds., *The Goths in the Fourth Century* (Liverpool, 1991), pp. 124–44.

[25] See: Koriwn, *Life of Mashtots*, eds., trans. M. Abeghian and B. Norehad (New York, 1964).

[26] Stories about how the alphabets were invented do exist but seem to have gained little traction. For Latin and the goddess Carmenta, see: Gaius Julius Hyginus, *Fable 277: First Inventors*, in *The Myths of Hyginus*, ed., trans. M. Grant (Lawrence, 1960), pp. 178–9. For Greek, see: Chapter 8. In the Arabic tradition, the sanctity of the language and its first speaker Ishmael was fossilised in a figure of memory-like narrative, rather than specifically the script itself. See: Ibn Qutayba, *The Excellence of the Arabs*, ed. J. Montgomery and P. Webb, trans. S. Savant and P. Webb (New York, 2017), pp. 27–30.

communities, or institutions go about recording the invention of theirs or others' writing systems is always contingent on the specific sociopolitical contexts which occasioned this act of recording.

The historian of medieval Japan, David Lurie, has noted that narratives of the origins of writing are 'highly ideological' and rarely if ever actually interested in confronting 'the emergence of something new in the distant past'.[27] Stories depicting the origins of writing are always in some sense allegorical, and 'writing is never invented only once, as it is repeatedly reconceptualized and reorganized when it is adopted and adapted for different purposes'.[28] This understanding forms the backbone of the present book and my approach to my sources. This is a book about narratives of the origins of writing, but only insofar as narratives of the origins of writing are never really about the origins of writing.

Inventing Slavonic: Sources for Origins and Textual Practice

Whilst the purpose of this book, therefore, is to interrogate the processes which produced competing myths about the origins of writing, it is worth here disaggregating the sources for the emergence of Slavonic. It is in part due to the problems with these sources, that many studies of the emergence of Slavonic have not consciously separated myth-making and practice.

This book is for the most part a study of changing ideas about and attitudes towards writing, as they are expressed in the earliest texts concerned with the invention of the Slavonic alphabet and its legendary ninth-century inventor, the Byzantine diplomat, Constantine-Cyril.[29] This largely means that I deal here with three myth-making texts, which have rarely been recognised by scholarship as plainly such.

The earliest accounts of the invention of the Slavonic alphabet are two hagiographies, the *Life of Constantine-Cyril*, its inventor, and the *Life of Methodios*, his brother-cum-companion. On the basis of philological and historical analysis, which I will engage with in more detail throughout the chapters to come, both of these texts have been dated to the late ninth century, within no more than a few decades of the deaths of their eponymous protagonists, sometime between 869 (when Cyril died), 885 (when Methodios died) and, at the latest, 907 (when the region was overrun by Hungarian invasion) and they survive in Slavonic language

[27] D. Lurie, 'Parables of Inscription: Some Notes on the Narratives of the Origin of Writing', *History and Theory*, 56 (2018), pp. 32–49, at p. 33.

[28] Ibid., pp. 48–9.

[29] Throughout this book I use Byzantine and East Roman or Medieval East Roman interchangeably. Since I am mostly concerned with culture I tend to use Byzantine to refer to a corpus of literature and a model of education, whereas East Roman appears more commonly when I talk about state or emperor. The orientalising baggage of 'Byzantium' as a term notwithstanding, it remains a legible shorthand, which I use out of necessity rather than political passion.

manuscripts only. These texts were written in either Rome or Moravia, a polity whose location remains disputed, but most probably covered territories between modern-day Hungary, Austria, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia.[30] Not much later, another account discussing the Slavonic alphabet's invention was written. A text, entitled *On Letters*, attributed to a monk Khrabur, which defends the alphabet against the Greek letters, has been dated to sometime between 907 and 927, not long after the arrival of the alphabet in the Balkans, where the text was most probably written. Although the transmission of these texts is fairly rigid and their contents surprisingly stable, they survive in much later manuscripts.[31]

There are, in addition, passing mentions of the fact Cyril invented the Slavonic letters in a number of Latin texts. Yet there is a much noted total silence from contemporary Byzantine sources. Some of the contents of the *vitae* are reiterated and reworked in undated Slavonic homilies and hymns in Cyril and Methodios' honour. There are also other Slavonic texts, dated to the early tenth-century Balkans through their language or their dedication to Bulgarian rulers, which offer occasional mention of Cyril and Methodios in passing. I use these throughout the book, where possible, as supplementary or contextual evidence. But when it comes to early medieval sources offering a narrative of the actual invention of the Slavonic alphabet from a near-contemporary period, the three texts at the heart of this book are essentially all that we have.

It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that in its choice of texts this study can hardly claim any novelty. In Vatroslav Jagić's 1895 collection of extracts and studies, entitled *Discussions on the Church Slavonic Language from South Slavonic and Early Rus Sources*, the *Life of Cyril*, the *Life of Methodios*, and *On Letters* already had pride of place, making up three out of the first four texts selected.[32] Just under a century later, in 1988, Boris Floria, produced an influential overview of the field and translation into Russian of what he calls *Narratives concerning the Beginning of Slavonic Literacy*. He chose the very same three texts to do so: the *Life of Cyril*, the *Life of Methodios*, and the treatise *On Letters*.[33]

There is something of a paradox in the evidence concerning the invention of Slavonic, however. Whilst in the *Life of Cyril* and *Life of Methodios*, the alphabet comes into being thanks to the request of the Moravian polity, and its earliest use is in Moravia, where Cyril and later Methodios are said to translate scriptural

[30] On the debates concerning the location of Moravia, see: M. Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia (858–882): Papal Power and Political Reality* (Leiden, 2014), pp. 138–68.

[31] The *Life of Cyril* is found, at the earliest, in a late fifteenth-century manuscript, the *Life of Methodios* in a (most probably) late twelfth-century manuscript, and *On Letters* in a codex from 1348. These will be discussed in more detail in each chapter.

[32] The fourth source was an extract from the *Tale of Bygone Years* ('Povest' vremennykh let'), the earliest chronicle of Rus, dated to long after the invention of the alphabet. V. Jagić, *Rassuzhdeniia iuzhnoslavianskoi i russkoi stariny o tserkovnoslavianskom iazyke: Izsledovaniia po russkomu iazyku* (St Petersburg, 1895).

[33] B. Floria, *Skazaniia o nachale slavianskoi pis'mennosti* (Moscow, 1988; repr. St Petersburg 2000).

texts, there is in actuality no securely dated manuscript or inscription in Slavonic from late ninth-century Moravia.

In fact, there is little evidence there was much writing of any sort in the region, which means any fragment thereof quickly produces scandal. In 2021, a team of archaeological scientists dated a bone which bore Germanic runes and was discovered in what is considered to be a 'Slavonic settlement' to the year ca. 600 AD, and termed it the 'oldest inscription amongst the Slavs'.[34] This is a fairly insignificant discovery, used to argue that Slavonic and German speakers coexisted in what was formerly (and unhelpfully) considered purely a Slavonic settlement. Yet, the outrage that followed demonstrates the level of tension inherent in the question of the earliest Slavonic writing. This was amusingly documented in a long-form *New York Times* investigation with the suitably orientalising title: 'A Scratched Hint of Ancient Ties Stirs National Furies in Eastern Europe'.[35]

Runes aside, the closest evidence of the use of a Slavonic alphabet in the region of Moravia is a number of pottery shards with individual symbols, some of which resemble Glagolitic letters, considered to be the earliest alphabet iteration invented by the hand of Cyril.[36] These shards were discovered in the early to mid-2000s amongst a huge collection of clay shards found on the Zalavár-Castle Island (over half a million fragments!) and are currently on display in the Hungarian National Museum.[37] The shards, found in an early church complex, remain near impossible to date concretely, but are found amongst shards with Greek invocations in Latin letters, a number of crosses, and a symbol often associated with the Turkic god Tengri and also found in early medieval Bulgaria.[38] They may therefore be the only material evidence we can associate with the Cyrillo-Methodian mission in Central Europe.

A rather different story is told purely from the surviving evidence of the contemporary practice of writing. The earliest explicitly dated Slavonic manuscript is a gospel from early Rus, dated to 1056–7.[39] The earliest dated inscription in Slavonic, discovered in 2015, is a funerary inscription bearing the date 921, found

[34] J. Machahek and R. Nedoma et al., 'Runes from Lany (Czech Republic): The Oldest Inscription amongst the Slavs. A New Standard for Multidisciplinary Analysis of Runic Bones', *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 127 (2021), pp. 1–8.

[35] I am grateful to Charles West for bringing this article to my attention. A. Higgins, 'A Scratched Hint of Ancient Ties Stirs National Furies in Eastern Europe', *New York Times*, 16 May 2021 (https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/16/world/europe/czech-germans-slavs-archaeology-bone.html?smid=tw-share) (last accessed: September 2023).

[36] I will discuss the two alphabet problem in Chapter 9 of this book, but in general have strayed away from it as our texts never refer to a specific alphabet.

[37] B. M. Szőke, ed., *The Carolingian Age in the Carpathian Basin: Permanent Exhibition of the Hungarian National Museum* (Budapest, 2014), p. 93, fig. 70.

[38] Ibid., p. 110.

[39] *Ostromirovo Evangelie 1056–1057 goda po izdaniiu A. Kh. Vostokova*, ed. A. A. Alekseev (Moscow, 2007).

in a rock-cut monastery near the north-western Bulgarian village of Krepcha.[40] Philologists place the earliest surviving Slavonic manuscripts, which are not internally dated, in the late tenth and early eleventh century, so after the collapse of the Moravian polity where the letters were supposedly invented.[41] These are usually gospels or psalters. None of the original translations of Cyril and Methodios, if they even resembled what the lives claim, have survived. Nor have any roughly contemporary manuscripts. A number of other texts, often translations or compilations from Greek, have been at various times associated with Cyril and Methodios' own hands, or Moravia more generally, but this has remained very speculative, and on a number of occasions a text considered original or Moravian has been discovered to be a compilation of extant Greek texts, or dated to the tenth-century Balkans.[42]

A more source-rich picture of the use of Slavonic emerges from the tenth-century Balkans, where the alphabet arrived sometime between the 880s and the 907 collapse of the Moravian polity, and where we can locate the third text which concerns this book, *On Letters*. In addition to a small corpus of dated inscriptions, the Balkans offer a rich corpus of undated epigraphy in what are most probably tenth-century monastic complexes—this includes both surviving alphabets that record Slavonic, the Glagolitic, and the Cyrillic. The aforementioned corpus of translations and a smaller set of short original compositions can also be dated to the early- to mid-tenth century through their authors or dedication to Bulgarian rulers. There was therefore some spread of the use of the alphabet throughout the Balkans by the mid-tenth century, even if the reach or depth of this remains hard to fully discern.

In short, the invention of Slavonic is quite unlike other instances of origins of writing myths, which, as Lurie has noted, are often later attempts to explain a distant past, influenced by contemporary literacy.[43] By contrast, the earliest narratives of the invention of Slavonic, and I mean the *Life of Cyril* especially, and to a somewhat lesser extent the *Life of Methodios*, dated to the late ninth century, seem to predate the widespread use of the Slavonic alphabet in our records. The figure of memory emerged almost contemporaneously with the early fragility of new literacies, and in this case is our only source of evidence for recovering this fragility. In this sense, despite the fact myth-making texts and the intellectual

[40] K. Popkonstantinov and A.-M. Totomanova, *Epokhata na bulgarskiiat tsar Samuil: Ezik i pismenost* (Sofia, 2014), p. 25. Prior to this, the earliest dated inscription was also from the Balkans and dated to 943, see: K. Popkonstantinov, 'Razprostranenie na starobulgarskata pismenost prez IX–X v. (po epigrafski danni)', *Starobulgarska literatura*, 17 (1985), pp. 59–61.

[41] A list of the manuscripts can be found in: K. Mirchev, *Starobulgarski ezik: Kratuk gramatichen ocherk* (Sofia, 1972), pp. 10–12.

[42] For a summary of recent work, see: A. Turilov, 'K izucheniiu velikomoravskogo literaturnogo naslediia: Promezhutochnye itogi, spornye voprosy i perspektivy', *Vestnik slavianskikh kul'tur*, 1 (2015), pp. 130–52.

[43] Lurie, 'Parables of Inscription', p. 33.

history of writing are my main concerns, the unique set of circumstances in which Slavonic emerged means this study inescapably deals with the sociopolitical contexts of writing, and comments on the institutions in place which promoted or prohibited the spread of literacy. Thus, and precisely because writing and its fragility did not emerge in a vacuum, I turn to the geopolitical framing of my inquiry.

Between Rome and Constantinople

A number of discourses about the space in-between major political centres have influenced my thinking when framing this study of the cultural and political space between Austria, Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, and the Balkans as 'between Rome and Constantinople'.

The first thing which drives this study is the recognition of the agency of actors in liminal in-between zones, and their possibility for both cooperation, or what Richard White calls 'productive misunderstanding' with imperial power in 'middle grounds', but also for resistance in spaces James C. Scott has called 'zomias' or 'shatter zones'.[44] In this book, emperors, popes, and patriarchs loom large, but they are often at a distance from our texts and their authors. The communities which produced the works under investigation here were the middle (wo)men, for whom central imperial power was at an arm's length, and who nonetheless tried to utilise this power, whether political or literary, for their own ends.

However, the studies of White and Scott, as well as a broad spectrum of studies in postcolonial contexts, which have focused on such interactions, have emerged from regions where there is a clear distinction between 'indigenous' and 'imperial' or 'colonial' culture. The culture of native Americans in the Great Lakes or that of the peoples of upland Southeast Asia was formed in isolation from the imperial powers which it later encountered. Whilst this distinction between a state of 'native-ness' and imperial infringement is tempting, it does not accurately reflect the deeply intertwined history of the region under investigation here.

The formation of polities and cultures in Central Europe, Italy, and the Balkans, was always done amidst others and amidst the legacies of (both Eastern and Western) Roman rule. There was no such thing as a fully insular and indigenous Avar or Germanic or Slavonic culture. Rather, as traced by Patrick Geary for the Germanic barbarian tribes, there were a range of processes of constructing cultural and political configurations in the aftermath of the fall of the Western

[44] R. White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (Cambridge, 1991, 2nd ed., 2011), p. ii; J. C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven, CT, 2009).

Roman Empire which elevated and essentialised different aspects of the identity, law, or political organisation at different times.[45]

Moreover, precisely due to the complex and overlapping history of the region, claims to indigeneity have little potential for liberation in Eastern Europe. They ultimately end up being claims to the primacy of one moment in medieval history over another. And worse still, this primacy of a particular moment of indigeneity is typically proposed in order to pursue or justify violent nationalist politics rather than justice for the subaltern. The reach of such claims can be quite striking. In July 2020, two-time Grammy Award winning pop star Dua Lipa posted a Tweet with a photo of a map of Greater Albania, the territory which modern right-wing movements perceive to be rightfully Albanian, with the word 'autochthonous' above it. The London-born star's parents were themselves born in Yugoslavia, but in the territory of modern-day Kosovo where many Albanian speakers reside. She accompanied the map with the following explanatory text:

> au•toch•tho•nous adjective
>
> (of an inhabitant of a place) indigenous rather than descended from migrants or colonists[46]

The territorial expansion of Albania over modern-day Kosovo, which the map calls for, is presented as justifiable because of the fact Albanian speakers (like Dua Lipa and her family) are indigenous to those lands. But of course, Albanian speakers have not occupied those lands since prehistory: the first polity considered Albanian in ethnic makeup dates to the late twelfth century. Unsurprisingly, therefore, competing claims to indigeneity are posed to their land foremost by Slavonic speakers, and the state of North Macedonia, who claim that the Slavs actually came to the Balkans before the Albanians, namely in the sixth and seventh centuries, and had a developed ethnic culture thanks to literacy and the Slavonic alphabet by the tenth century.

Even engaging with this debate, however, means conceding to the logic of these arguments of national-ethnic essentialism and continuity. But it leads me onto the second key way this book sees this region, or rather the way my framing explicitly does not view the region at hand: namely as one divided into (larger) imperial and (smaller) ethnic political entities. This kind of way of viewing Central and South-Eastern Europe has emerged from the study of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, and has plenty of explanatory power for that period. At the turn of the twentieth century, the region was deemed a

[45] P. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton, NJ, 2002), especially chapter 4.

[46] Dua Lipa, Twitter, 19 July 2020, https://twitter.com/DUALIPA/status/1284928447912050688?s=20 (last accessed: September 2023).

shatter-zone of empires by Bartov and Weitz, as it saw the decline of Habsburg, Ottoman, and Russian imperial power, as they gave way to nationalist movements, and a wave of violence and forced migration. But the consensus created by nationalism that 'conformity of territorial and ethnic borders was the natural state of being' is perniciously prevalent in the historiography of the Middle Ages of this region.[47] A metaphorical parallel has emerged, often viewing Byzantine and Frankish overlords as the imperial oppressors akin to later Ottoman and Habsburg ones, and resistant to emergent ethnic movements for autonomy by Slavs in general.[48] In this light, the rise of Moravia, Pannonia, and Bulgaria in the ninth and tenth centuries, more particularly, have been viewed as the original birth of the then emergent Czech, Slovak, and Bulgarian nationalist movements.

I maintain that no medieval ruler believed strictly that 'people were essentially constituted in nations', that these nations deserved political autonomy and that attaining such autonomy was the purpose of political organisation. Rulers of Slavic or other descent were not striving for the equity of political and ethnic borders any more than their 'imperial' counterparts. Therefore, it is worth not separating the polities found in this region into 'empires' and more or less 'ethnic kingdoms'. Rather, Central and Eastern Europe was populated by short-lived, often fragile young polities which could and often did have great imperial pretensions of their own. These emerged in the space between two political entities, in the face of the East Roman Empire and the East Frankish Kingdom, eager to stress their own stability, but who were themselves subject to constant internal upheaval and reinvention.

Since ethnicity or nationhood was not the sole driver of political activity in this period, I also maintain that it did not delineate or create isolated systems of cultural production. Thus I take Rome and Constantinople to stand in for two sets of scribal cultures, both sacred and bureaucratic, in Latin and Greek. These sources of cultural capital were both available to the textual communities which concern me here, but at different times and to differing degrees. But Rome and Constantinople also interacted with and influenced one another. My purpose therefore is to contextualise the work of medieval authors and their communities to reveal how they used the resources of Rome and Constantinople's scribal cultures and their relationships with one another, to their own authorial ends. And further, I seek to show how these authors sought to change not only themselves but Rome and Constantinople in the act of doing so.

[47] O. Bartov and E. Weitz, *Shatterzones of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian and Ottoman Borderlands* (Bloomington, IN, 2013), p. 5. On the foundational prevalence of nationalist logic in Bulgarian historiography, for example, see: Daskalov, *Master Narratives*.

[48] For a survey of these competing national claims and their relationship with Byzantium in particular see: Mishkova, *Rival Byzantiums*.

With all this in mind, what follows is a brief precis of the high politics of the region under consideration for the uninitiated reader. More elaborate accounts are to be found in the footnotes. Of course, full sensitivity to the complex issues of the ethnic makeup of polities notwithstanding, a short precis will always compress information. I hope, therefore, the reader will forgive the nuance lost.

The late ninth-century East Roman state has often been categorised largely by what came before and after it: not as 'bad' as the catastrophic seventh and eighth centuries, when the state was losing much of its eastern territory to Arab raids, and Balkan territory to Avars, Slavs, and Bulgars, but not quite as 'good' as the tenth century, which saw some territorial gains in the east, and by the turn of the eleventh, the total incorporation of the Balkans into Medieval East Roman territory.[49] In this territorial stasis, the ninth century saw the eventual resolution of the iconoclast controversy, and a rich corpus of intellectual production, whether that be iconodule hagiography, comprehensive chronicles, or philosophical learning, as personified by the sometime patriarch of Constantinople, Photios (858–67, 877–86) who will feature heavily in this book.[50] By the late ninth century, the imperial elite was looking outward again, successfully converting the neighbouring Bulgarian polity from the 860s onwards, trying to convert the Khazars of the north Caucasus with less success (ca. 861), and agreeing, at least according to the *Life of Cyril*, to send teachers to Moravia (ca. 864).[51] These were early steps towards a more comprehensive missionary effort in the tenth century.[52]

The fate of the Bulgarian polity, which concerns the last third of this book, is deeply intertwined with that of the Byzantine empire. The Bulgars, a nomadic Turkic people from the central Asian steppe, arrived in the North-Eastern Balkans in the late seventh century. How many came remains unclear and guestimates range from 20,000 to 300,000.[53] Likewise, who they found there and in what

[49] See: L. Brubaker, ed., *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?* (Aldershot, 1998); J. Haldon, *The Empire That Would Not Die: The Paradox of Eastern Roman Survival, 640–740* (Cambridge, MA, 2016); J. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century* (Oxford, 2010); W. Pohl, *The Avars: A Steppe Empire in Central Europe, 567–822* (Ithaca, NY, 2018); J. Shepard, 'Slavs and Bulgars', in R. McKitterick, ed., *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 2: *c.700–900* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 228–48; M. Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium, 600–1025* (Berkeley, CA, 1996); C. Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire (976–1025)* (Oxford, 2006); A. Kaldellis, *Streams of Gold, Rivers of Blood: The Rise and Fall of Byzantium, 955 AD to the First Crusade* (Oxford, 2019).

[50] See: L. Brubaker and J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History* (Cambridge, 2011); A.-M. Talbot, ed., *Byzantine Defenders of Images: Eight Saints' Lives in Translation* (Washington, DC, 1998); Theophanes Confessor, *Chronicle,* in C. Mango et al. trans., *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History, AD 284–813* (Oxford, 1997). On philosophy, see the ERC-Funded project hosted at the Vienna Academy of Science: 'Reassessing Ninth-Century Philosophy: A Synchronic Approach to the Logical Traditions', https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/648298 (last accessed: September 2023).

[51] J. Shepard, 'The Khazars' Formal Adoption of Judaism and Byzantium's Northern Policy', *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, 31 (1998), pp. 11–34.

[52] S. Ivanov, *'Pearls before Swine': Missionary Work in Byzantium*, trans. D. Hoffman (Paris, 2015), pp. 89–90.

[53] Daskalov, *Master Narratives*, p. 160.

quantities is uncertain, but it no doubt included some formerly East Roman subjects and others who had never been under imperial rule, and who were made up of Greek and Slavonic-speaking peoples. By the turn of the ninth century, the Bulgars controlled much of the territory of modern Bulgaria, as well as southern Romania, south of the Carpathian Mountains, and more irregularly the areas of Thrace and Northern Greece. At around the same time, archaeology suggests their formerly nomadic or semi-nomadic ways were being shed, and stone constructions, identified as palaces, replaced what seem to have been wooden structures for temporary habitation in the 'capital', Pliska.[54] A short king-list of the Turkic rulers and their tribes aside, no native chronicles survive, but it appears that this initially Turkic-speaking elite also began to adopt and adapt East Roman, sedentary-state customs: using seals and Greek inscriptions.[55]

By the 860s the elite pursued Christianisation. Perhaps the best recorded period of medieval Bulgarian history is the long negotiation between the ruler Boris (ca. 852–89, 889–93) and the Constantinopolitan and Roman churches.[56] Boris settled with the Orthodox Church by 870 but whilst official conversation was complete, cultural Christianisation was only just beginning, and Pope John VIII continued to write to Boris in the hope he would change his mind. It was in this context that the Slavonic alphabet arrived in the Balkans, and received some patronage from Boris and his son, Symeon (ca. 893–927). It is unclear how far the Bulgar elite, who still used Turkic honorific titles in their Greek inscriptions in the early ninth century and produced at least two inscriptions in what seems to be a Turkic language with Greek letters, had become 'Slavicised'.[57] Nineteenth-century pseudo-science's race hierarchy incentivised Bulgarian scholars to peddle this Slavicisation with some vigour, perceiving the Slavs as a superior or more Aryan race with which to become associated.[58] More recently in scholarship since 1989, as the political tide in Bulgaria has turned away from Russia and the Soviet block and towards the European Union, pan-Slavonic brotherhood has been replaced with an interest in and rehabilitation of the Bulgars, as well as suggestions their culture

[54] U. Fiedler, 'Bulgars in the Lower Danube Region: A Survey of the Archaeological Evidence and of the State of Current Research', in F. Curta and R. Kovalev, eds., *The Other Europe in the Middle Ages: Avars, Bulgars, Khazars and Cumans* (Leiden, 2007), p. 173. More generally on early Bulgarian culture: R. Rashev, *Bulgarskata ezicheska kultura VII–IX vek* (Sofia, 2006), and the exhibition catalogue: *Ezicheska Bulgariia. Vlast i obshtestvo* (Sofia, 2017).

[55] For the name list: S. Chureshki, *Immenik na bulgarskite knyaze (khanove)* (Sofia, 2012). On inscriptions and seals: V. Beshevliev, ed., *Purvobulgarski nadpisi* (2nd ed., Sofia, 1979); I. Iordanov, ed., *Korpus na pechatite na srednovekovna Bulgariia* (Sofia, 2001).

[56] Boris' dates are interrupted by the rule of his son Vladimir, who may have tried to restore paganism, and was quickly removed by his father. For an overview, see: V. Giuzelev, *Papstvoto i bulgarite prez srednovekovieto, (IX–XVv.)* (Plovdiv, 2009), pp. 113–49.

[57] Beshevliev, *Purvobulgarski nadpisi*, nn. 53–4, pp. 186–90.

[58] S. Detchev, 'Between Slavs and Old Bulgars: "Ancestors", "Race" and Identity in Late Nineteenth-Century Bulgaria', in P. Geary and G. Klaniczay, eds., *Manufacturing Middle Ages: Entangled History of Medievalism in Nineteenth Century Europe* (Leiden, 2013), pp. 243–76.

persisted longer than previously suggested.[59] But as far as the medieval evidence is concerned, it cannot be known for certain whether the Slavonic alphabet, at the time of its arrival, was an alphabet for a majority or minority language, or an alphabet for a ruling or under class. In short, the decision to adopt it cannot simply be assumed to be the most obvious thing to do.

Neither the appointment of Photios as patriarch of Constantinople nor the conversion of the Bulgarians pleased Rome. In fact, questions of jurisdiction were ever more pertinent in the ninth century, as a scandal over the deposition of a Byzantine bishop in Italy, Geregory Asbestas, spiralled into what would become 'the Photian schism', or papal excommunication of the Photios, patriarch of Constantinople.[60] Papal records show a preoccupation with Photios and Constantinopolitan affairs, as well as sustained communication with Boris long after the expulsion of the Latin clergy from Bulgaria.[61] Rome and Constantinople were very well connected in this period, in part precisely as a result of these matters of dispute. Evangelos Chrysos notes that there were thirty embassies recorded between the two centres between 860 and 880 alone.[62] Moreover, Greek monks were not rare in Rome, which boasted six Greek monastic communities at the turn of the ninth century, and nor were papal delegates unusual in Constantinople.[63] Cultural contact was not all about conflict, however. One papal delegate, Anastasios the Librarian, returned to Rome with a corpus of Greek texts, which he went on to translate into Latin.[64]

Whereas, Byzantium's sacred and bureaucratic scribal cultures went hand in hand, at least in principle, and emperors appointed patriarchs, the relationships between the papacy and the Carolingian rulers in the ninth century were far from rosy. Louis the German, ruler of the East Frankish kingdom, had himself tried to baptise Boris, and more generally the Frankish rulers started to undertake their religious activity, whether canonical, or missionary, in house.[65] The late ninth century in particular saw an extremely concerted effort by Pope Nicholas I, Pope

[59] Daskalov, *Master Narratives*, pp. 271–3.

[60] F. Montinaro, 'Introduction', in *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 869–70*, trans. R. Price, introduction and notes by F. Montinaro (Liverpool, 2022), pp. 8–20.

[61] See: *Notice for Hadrian II*, in *Le Liber Pontificalis: texte, introduction et commentaire*, ed. L. Duchesne, vol. 2 (Paris, 1892), 108.1–109; *The Lives of the Ninth Century Popes (Liber Pontificalis): the Ancient Biographies of Ten Popes from AD 817–891*, trans. R. Davis (Liverpool, 1995), pp. 259–92. And especially the letters to Boris from 880–2, see: John VIII, *Letters*, in *Registrum Iohannis VIII. papae*, ed. Caspar, in *MGH*, Epp VII (Epistolae Karolini Aevi V), (2nd ed., Berlin, 1974).

[62] E. Chrysos, 'Rome and Constantinople in Confrontation: The Quarrel over the Validity of Photius' Ordination', in D. Slootjes and M. Verhoeven, eds., *Byzantium in Dialogue with the Mediterranean: History and Heritage* (Leiden, 2019), pp. 24–46, at p. 41.

[63] M. Costambeys and C. Leyser, 'To be the Neighbour of St Stephen: Patronage, Martyr Cult and Roman Monasteries, c.600–c.900', in K. Cooper and J. Hillner, eds., *Religion, Dynasty, and Patronage in Early Christian Rome, 300–900* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 262–87, at pp. 271–2.

[64] See: R. Forrai, *The Interpreter of Popes: The Translation Project of Anastasius Bibliothecarius* (PhD Thesis, Central European University, 2008).

[65] *Annals of St-Bertin*, 864, in *Les Annales de Saint-Bertin*, eds., F. Grat, J. Vieillard, and S. Clémencet (Paris, 1964); *The Annals of St-Bertin*, trans. J. Nelson (Manchester, 1991). See: H. Reimitz, 'Conversion

Hadrian II, and Pope John VIII to 'restore' a constructed image of the former missionary glory of the papacy as an institution, whether through their own interest in Bulgaria and Moravia, or through their literary output: biographical notices, lives of earlier missionary popes, letters to foreign rulers, and the way they chose to keep their own records.[66]

Making the papacy missionary again, especially with respect to Moravia and Pannonia inevitably displeased the Frankish kings. The region to the east of the Frankish polities had been occupied by the Avar Khaganate until the turn of the ninth century, when its western territories were subsumed by the Franks and its south-eastern territories fell to the Bulgarians. The Franks undertook a process of Christianisation, for which none other than Alcuin, Charlemagne's main court scholar, came up with a blueprint, to be found in various missionary hagiographic accounts.[67] The Frankish authorities, therefore, very much saw these territories as their own to convert and administer. And the proximity of these formerly Avar territories to areas of strong historic Constantinopolitan influence, brought to the forefront some theological tension between the Frankish and Byzantine churches over the question of the *filioque*, namely whether the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son or only from the Father.[68]

The actual emergence of the short-lived polities or principalities of Moravia and Pannonia in this region is hard to pinpoint, as prior to their mid ninth-century appearances found in the *Life of Cyril* and *Life of Methodios*, Latin chronicles record various interactions between simply 'Slavic leaders' and Frankish kings. Both polities were clearly created or at least granted by the Frankish kings on formerly Avar lands which seem to have already had some Slavonic-speaking inhabitants, although ethnicity in the Avar polity remains a subject of dispute.[69] Both principalities therefore had deeply intertwined histories. But conflicting narratives coexist in modern scholarship as a result of the association of Moravia with the ancestor to the Czechs and Pannonia with the ancestor of the Slovaks.[70]

The region of Pannonia in particular—also called Carantania, the Balaton Principality, or the Principality of Lower Pannonia—was granted to Pribina, a

and Control: The Establishment of Liturgical Frontiers in Carolingian Panonnia', in W. Pohl et al., eds., *The Transformation of Frontiers: From Late Antiquity to the Carolingians* (Leiden, 2001), pp. 188–207.

[66] More on this in Chapter 6, see also: C. Leyser, 'The Memory of Gregory the Great and the Making of Latin Europe, 600–1000', in K. Cooper and C. Leyser, eds., *Making Early Medieval Societies: Conflict and Belonging in the Latin West, 300–1200* (Cambridge, 2016), pp. 181–201.

[67] I. Wood, *The Missionary Life: Saints and the Evangelisation of Europe, 400–1500* (Harlow, 2001), pp. 85–90, esp. p. 90.

[68] See: T. Kolbaba, *Inventing Latin Heretics: Byzantines and the Filioque in the Ninth Century* (Kalamazoo, MI, 2008).

[69] See: W. Pohl, *The Avars: A Steppe Empire in Europe* (Ithaca, NY, 2018), chapters 1 and 4.

[70] It suffices to compare the rather contradictory English-language Wikipedia pages for each polity to get a sense of their contested histories.

Slavic lord, as an imperial gift in 848.[71] Estimates of the area it covered vary, but it was most probably located south-south-east of Moravia, and included Lake Balaton in modern-day Hungary as well as possibly some lands in modern-day Serbia. By the late ninth century it was held by Pribina's son, Kočel (ca. 861/4–76), about whom we have rather conflicting records in Latin and Slavonic. He was the last recorded leader of the principality. Today, a twentieth-century statue of him is to be found in the National Assembly of Serbia in Belgrade.

The first mention of a Moravian duke, Mojmir, is in a ninth-century Latin text primarily concerned with Pannonia. It records that he attacked Pribina, the first ruler of the Pannonian principality.[72] This resulted in Louis the German's appointment of Rastislav, Mojmir's nephew, to the duchy of Moravia.[73] Rastislav (ca. 846–70) was also intent on more independence, however. He supported a number of anti-Louis rebellions, including the 861 rebellion against Louis by his son, Carloman.[74] In response, Louis the German contacted none other than the Bulgarian ruler, Boris, to ask for support against the Moravians in 863.[75] It is in this immediate context, at least according to the *Life of Cyril*, that Rastislav contacted the East Roman emperor Michael III to ask for preachers and a bishop in the Slavonic language, ca. 864. This was the very same year when Boris is recorded as contacting Louis the German for preachers in Latin in the *Annals of St Bertin*.[76] Moravia's rule then fell to Sviatopluk, Rastislav's nephew, who continued to cause problems for the Franks, regularly invading Pannonia and supporting rebellions.[77] Sviatopluk died around 894, and after some decades of succession disputes, the Hungarians migrated from the Black Sea steppe and settled the territory by 907. Before too long, the Moravian principality was no more.[78]

Conclusions and Addenda

It would be an understatement to say that scholarship on the invention of Slavonic is overwhelming in quantity. Yet despite the intimidating amount of work produced and continuing to be produced on the invention of Slavonic, and the mission of Cyril and Methodios to Moravia, there has been a self-diagnosed stalemate in the field. When, in 2000, Floria wrote a new introduction to his 1988 volume

[71] *Die Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum und der Brief des Erzbischofs Theotmar von Salzburg*, ed., trans. F. Lošek (Hanover, 1997), 12. (Henceforth, *Conversio*.)

[72] Ibid., 13.

[73] *The Annals of Fulda*, 846, in *Annales Fuldenses*, ed. F. Kurze, *MHG*, Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum 7 (Hanover, 1891). *The Annals of Fulda*, trans. T. Reuter (Manchester, 1993).

[74] Ibid., 855. [75] Ibid., 863. [76] *Annals of St-Bertin*, 864. [77] Ibid., 869–95.

[78] Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *De Administrando Imperio*, 41, in Konstantin Bagrianorodnyi, *Ob Upravlenii imperiei*, eds., trans. G. G. Litavrin and A. P. Novoseltsev (Moscow, 1989).

mentioned above, he had the option of revising and updating his bibliography in light of new research. He noted instead:

> Однако знакомство с появившимися за это время исследованиями позволило автору сделать вывод, что ни вступительная статья, ни комментарий к переводам памятников не требуют значительной переработки.[79]
>
> An acquaintance with the research which has appeared over the course of this time, has permitted the author the conclusion, that neither the introductory essay, nor the commentary to the translations of the textual monuments needs any significant reworking.

The same impression emerges from Anatoly Turilov's 2015 review of new developments in scholarship on the mission to Moravia and its legacy between 1985 and 2015.[80] The review sidesteps the questions surrounding the narrative of the invention and the lives of Cyril and Methodios, and focuses instead on impressive recent discoveries in the sphere of early Slavonic hymnography.[81] Whilst important philological work continues to revise the corpus of translations dated to the early period, no new original compositions have emerged outside of hymnography; nor have any new sources emerged to modify the narrative of the invention of Slavonic as outlined above.

Nevertheless, historical inquiry has continued its preoccupation with specific factual matters about which the surviving texts do not offer sufficient information, despite no new evidence having come to light. The debate continues to address speculative questions such as: where was medieval Moravia precisely? What is the mysterious language called 'ros'sky' in the *Life of Cyril*, which the saint learns? Was it Methodios or his disciple Clement of Ohrid that wrote the *Life of Cyril*? Did Cyril's mission to the Abbasids happen, and if so on which mission recorded in Greek chronicles was he, and did he go to Samarra or Baghdad? Vast quantities of such scholarship continue to be produced, cycling through such a multiplicity of speculations that we now see early twentieth-century readings being resurrected.[82] The variety of specific interpretations, however, has been

[79] Floria, *Skazaniia*, p. 5.
[80] Turilov, 'K izucheniiu velikomoravskogo literaturnogo naslediia', pp. 130–52.
[81] Ibid., pp. 134–7.
[82] For instance, the idea that *On Letters* was written against the Byzantine Greek clergy was proposed in 1927, then largely dismissed, and then resurrected in 2017. V. Zlatarski, *Istoriia na Bulgarskata durzhava prez srednite vekove*, vol. 1.2 (Sofia, 1927; repr. Sofia, 1994), p. 283; Kh. Trendafilov, 'Symeon v Pliska', *Preslavska knizhovna shkola*, 17 (2017), pp. 177–92, at p. 185. In a similar vein, if not as prolonged, in 1993, Tachiaos suggested Cyril invented letters for the Rus first on his trip to the Khazars. Seemingly without any knowledge of this, Lienhard suggested the same in 2020. A. Tachiaos, 'Some Controversial Points Relating to the Life and Activity of Cyril and Methodios', *Cyrillomethodianum*, 17–18 (1993–4), pp. 41–73, at pp. 45–70. T. Lienhard, 'The Life of Constantine, the Life of Methodios and the History of the Slavs in the Ninth Century: A Reassessment', *Early Medieval Europe*, 28 (2020), pp. 57–78.

accompanied by a general unity in method, namely a preoccupation with our medieval texts as sources with which to establish the factual-historical narrative of events that occurred.

This book undertakes two intellectual projects. The first is to devise a methodology which adequately equips us to analyse the kinds of texts produced in the Central and East European medieval world. This is done as a conscious attempt to move scholarship on this topic and on the region more broadly away from the questions which have long preoccupied it, largely to do with establishing or verifying events that occurred, but often doing so within pre-existing national frameworks. This methodological move is in line with some recent work in Byzantine and medieval studies, which has sought to propose new ways of reading texts and approaching language and identity.[83] Although some of this work has turned to the north-eastern Slavs of Rus, little of it has trickled into studies of medieval Central and South-Eastern Europe.[84]

The second is to show how this new methodological approach can produce new arguments about the invention of Slavonic in particular and new insights into the social world in which it emerged. So in place of what is lost in this source-critical study, namely certainty about some of the events that occurred, I emphasise instead what is gained: on the one hand, an insight into the dynamic and sophisticated intellectual culture of Central and Eastern Europe, which is integrated into the intellectual worlds of both East Roman and the Frankish realm and has consequences for the study of both. On the other hand, this book proposes a new social history of the efforts of educated clerics to both adjust to and transform their sociopolitical circumstances, caught in the borderlands between the hegemonic centres of cultural production, Rome and Constantinople. Both in its method and in its findings, my one ambition is to bring new life to the study of this rich topic.

Chapter Summary

This book is divided into three parts. The first deals with and situates the earliest account of the invention of Slavonic, as narrated in the *Life of Cyril*. In Chapter 1, I offer a short precis of the historiography of the text and some of the problems

[83] For instance: M. Mullett, *Theophylact of Ohrid: Reading the Letters of a Byzantine Archbishop* (Birmingham, 1997); A. Kaldellis, 'The Study of Women and Children: Methodological Challenges and New Directions', in P. Stephenson, ed., *The Byzantine World* (Abingdon, 2010), pp. 61–71; S. Gaunt, 'French Literature Abroad: Towards an Alternative History of French Literature', *Interfaces*, 1 (2015), pp. 25–61; G. Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2018).

[84] For instance: S. Plokhy, *The Origins of the Slavic Nations: Premodern Identities in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus* (Cambridge, 2006); this interesting attempt to write the history of Rus without the *Tale of Bygone Years*: A. P. Tolochko, *Ocherki nachal'noi Rusi* (Kiev, 2015); and more generally the work of Simon Franklin.

with studying a figure so celebrated. In Chapter 2, I offer a new reading of the text, arguing that it is a profoundly Byzantine hagiography, originally written by a Byzantine author and most probably in Greek. Perhaps precisely due to the fact the *Life* was written so soon after the alphabet's initial invention, the script creation is by no means the central focus of the text. Its brief appearance in the text is best integrated within the wider argument the text makes for the sanctity of Cyril, as a philosopher and saint. I argue that the text is organised around a tripartite process of learning and the application of learning through disputation. This learning intentionally harmonises the tension between piety and 'outside', or classical, education present in ninth-century Constantinopolitan culture. Having understood *what* the text is arguing, in Chapter 3, I make arguments about *who* the text is arguing with. This chapter situates the text, within the genre of contemporary Byzantine hagiography, and within the intellectual context of a ninth-century Constantinopolitan elite preoccupied with the relationship between learning and piety. I suggest that the particular discourse with which this text is engaging as the 'anti-Photian' position, associated with supporters of Patriarch Ignatios. I tease out two of this position's key tenets and demonstrate how the *Life* subverts them. Given these preoccupations, I posit the text was written in Greek very shortly after the death of Cyril in 869, most probably in Rome. It did not perceive itself as a mythical account of a predestined alphabet inventor, but rather as a specific contribution to an immediate intellectual problem. This argument about education and missionary activity, however, fell on deaf ears, as the Moravian milieu underwent a profound transformation, and the *Life of Cyril* never made it back into the Constantinopolitan discursive milieu it targeted.

The break with this early Byzantine intellectual agenda and with the East Roman political elite more generally is marked by the reinvention of the alphabet and of Cyril himself in the *Life of Methodios*, which forms the basis of the second part of this book: the institutionalisation of Slavonic. Chapter 4 situates the study of Methodios, and offers a critical assessment of how the two brothers have been paired by scholarship, and how this has resulted in collapsing the *Life of Methodios* into the *Life of Cyril*, as no more than a supplement or extension. Chapter 5 offers a new reading of the text on its own terms, and demonstrates it to be a radical reinvention of Slavonic, but also of its main actors. The text diminishes the significance of Cyril, learning and rhetoric, and makes the role of Byzantine imperial power appear distant and mythical. In so doing, it redistributes the agency of Cyril, as it is found in the *Life of Cyril,* to the pope and the institution of the (Latin) church, through its more general promotion of papal primacy. This transformation of the alphabet also marks its institutionalisation. Finally, the *Life of Methodios* forges two bonds absent in the *Life of Cyril* but ubiquitous in scholarship: a bond between Cyril and Methodios as a sacred pair with one shared purpose, and another between Methodios and the Slavic peoples. Chapter 6 situates the text in an intellectual milieu. It demonstrates that the author of the *Life of*

Methodios is using Byzantine materials, but that they do so whilst addressing a Latinate audience. Against the grain of scholarship, this chapter posits that this text is best situated within the corpus of Latin missionary hagiography. A nuanced study of ideas about missionary activity between Rome and the Carolingian empire allows me to explain specific narrative interventions made by the *Life of Methodios* into the events presented in the narrative of the *Life of Cyril*. Through this, I show that the unification of the brothers and their relationship with the Slavs are best understood as answers to Frankish claims over the ecclesiastical hegemony of Moravia as they are recorded in the ninth-century Latin text, the *Conversion of the Bavarians and Carantanians*. This defence of Methodios' legitimacy over Moravia and Pannonia was much needed in the late 880s and 890s, as papal support for the mission wavered. However, much like its main source text, the *Life of Cyril*, the best efforts of the author of the *Life of Methodios* and their community had limited success.

The use of Slavonic in liturgy was banned in Rome in 890. But this was not the end of the Slavonic alphabet. By the turn of the tenth century some scribes with the alphabet arrived from Moravia in the Balkans, together with both versions of the invention of Slavonic noted above. This is the focus of the third part of this monograph. Here too, the set of political and cultural concerns pertaining to the alphabet and its use were transformed, and neither the *Life of Cyril* nor the *Life of Methodios* sufficed. Chapter 7 opens this third phase of the invention of Slavonic with a historiographical critique. In particular, I point out the way in which state fetishisation and teleology have produced a particular and simplistic account of the arrival of Slavonic in the Balkans. Chapter 8 offers a reading of how Slavonic was invented anew in *On Letters*, the first text explicitly concerned with the alphabet, rather than the Byzantine philosopher saint who invented it, or the papally aligned clerics in Moravia who inherited it. The text marked the return of the Slavonic alphabet into a cultural sphere dominated by Byzantine-Greek hegemony, but it is also the first version of the invention of Slavonic targeted specifically at Slavonic speakers: I call this therefore the first such Byzantino-Slavic text. In it, the author puts Cyril front and centre, but strips him of his Greek identity, and dislocates the event of the invention from its historical specificity in Moravia. The invention becomes an event in the universal history of the Slavonic peoples, whose identity the author seeks to mobilise, against the use of Greek. This is the closest to the figure of memory in modern scholarship. But the position of the text is once again best explained by its immediate intellectual and political context, which I turn to in Chapter 9. In *On Letters*, the matter of missionary activity is abandoned for a specific, scholarly debate about the history of language, and so the chapter situates this text within an inward-looking, educated, monastic community. Amongst contemporary Slavonic texts and the available sigillographic and epigraphic evidence, the author's position appears somewhat unusual. They seek to separate the bilingual milieu which was

responsible for the production of the earliest Slavonic texts in the Balkans into Greek and Slavonic bookmen. That they seek to do so in such an aggressive fashion leads me to posit that it is possible that some Slavonic speakers in the Balkans resisted the use of Slavonic literacy, and that this text reveals the earliest evidence of internal reluctance to adopt the new script. Even though this text propagates an invention of Slavonic most similar to that found in modern scholarship, what it actually reveals is that in its own time, the author held an unusual position of linguistic exclusivity in an environment of identarian fluidity.

The Slavonic alphabet made its way from Moravia to the Balkans, therefore, in part due to a number of failures: the failure of the author of the *Life of Cyril* to have their text received in Constantinopolitan and wider East Roman intellectual culture and the failure of the author of the *Life of Methodios* to secure the support of the papacy. This study seeks to reveal the cracks behind the surface narrative of continuity in the invention of Slavonic, in order to offer insight into a social history of the fragility of the early script, and the often-contemporary concerns which preoccupied its users and defenders. It seeks to show how the idea that the Slavonic alphabet was unequivocally and undoubtedly a *good thing* for Slavonic people has been taken for granted for too long. In the texts which concern this book it is clear that the alphabet's users were often not as preoccupied with the alphabet as they were with other social and intellectual problems. Often, they used the alphabet, instrumentally, to resolve the problems they faced, sometimes they invoked the brotherhood of Cyril and Methodios, at others some suddenly relevant relationship between them and the Slavs. These various intellectual agendas performed by conscious political actors to promote specific ends are flattened or lost completely in the narrative that so prevails and reproduces itself in scholarship.

A Note on Method

As noted above, it is through a methodological innovation in the study of the invention of Slavonic that I seek to offer new readings of the medieval past. This methodology did not come to its sources pre-made or pre-packaged but was formed by the interaction between the types of evidence available, their possibilities and limitations, and a number of theoretical frameworks. In what follows, I offer the reader a self-conscious reflection on the assumptions guiding the historical analysis in this book. This is done in line with the maxim of Hayden White that 'historians who draw a firm line between history and philosophy of history fail to recognize that every historical discourse contains within it a full-blown if only implicit, philosophy of history'.[85]

[85] H. White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore, 1978), pp. 126–7.

There are a number of academic discourses through which to describe the historical analysis to be found in this inquiry, and all of them have to a greater or lesser extent influenced it. By recognising, in the words of the scholar of medieval historiography, Gabrielle Spiegel, that 'texts both mirror and generate social realities, which they may sustain, resist, contest or seek to transform', I draw not only on intellectual history as practised primarily by the so-called Cambridge school and spearheaded by Quentin Skinner, but also on Spiegel's work on the social logic of the text.[86] I also draw on the Marxian theorist Frederick Jameson's work on narrative as a socially symbolic act, an act which seeks to resolve the contradictions inherent in the sociopolitical structures of its context.[87]

What these approaches have in common, and share with that of this book, is that they look to alternative ways of reading texts which prioritise their immediate local intervention over and above their absolute truth values. This book, together with all three approaches, 'elucidates the meaning of texts and documents by investigating the circumstances of their composition, uses, and further receptions'.[88] Thus, both this book and the theorists outlined, rely on the value of some form of contextualisation to elucidate meaning.

But there is little agreement on what effective contextualisation looks like, especially when it comes to the relationship between social and economic context, and intellectual context. Skinner in particular is keen to stress that understanding social conditions may serve to explain texts but not to 'understand them', and thus that the sociopolitical can in some sense be superseded by the context of ideas.[89] Jameson and Spiegel both attribute more interpretive weight to material conditions and specific social sites, as equally fundamental to understanding texts.[90]

The inverse side to establishing the bounds of context is establishing the agency of the author. Here too, disagreement is common. Skinner and the intellectual school grant the author and their intentions the most autonomy. Jameson's Marxian framework argues instead, for what he calls 'semi-autonomy'. And Spiegel's collected essays on theory and practice in medieval historiography leave the matter largely untheorised. In what follows therefore, I outline where I have followed, parted with, and mixed these approaches, in the most crucial methodological concepts of this book: firstly, on the matter of contextualisation, and then on the question of authorship and audience.

[86] G. Spiegel, 'History, Historicism and the Social Logic of the Text', in her *The Past as Text: the Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore, 1997), pp. 3–28, at 24; Q. Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', in his *Visions of Politics*, vol.1: *Regarding Method* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 57–89.

[87] F. Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London, 2002), p. 27.

[88] I. Hunter, 'The Contest over Context in Intellectual History', *History and Theory*, 58 (2019), pp. 185–208, at p. 185.

[89] Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', p. 61.

[90] Spiegel, 'History, Historicism and the Social Logic of the Text', p. 26.

Context

Three different kinds of contextualisation are performed in this book, which seek to recognise that texts exist in multiple *kinds* of contexts and that no one method of contextualisation will ever lead to an exhaustive understanding of the text. In doing so I seek to engage with and offer some solutions to critiques that contextualisation has faced.

The first kind of context considered by each chapter is an analysis of the identifiable sources used by each text. The method of citation greatly varies between our texts, and I consider citation in two ways. The first is the closeness of the words used: how far the text is an exact word-for-word replica of an identifiable source text. The second is the ideological thrust of the words: how far our authors agree with the ideological positioning of the words of their source texts, and how far they are using their source texts to promote another, different agenda. In some instances, close citation in words also reflects a general alignment of ideas, as in the neoplatonic definition of philosophy in the *Life of Cyril*. In other instances, a looseness of language also aligns with a profound transformation of the ideological position of the text cited, as in the use of a Byzantine synopsis of the ecumenical councils in the *Life of Methodios*. But in other cases, very close textual citation can be used to put forward a new, different argument, at odds with the position held by the text from which these words are taken, as in the use of Greek grammatical textbooks in the treatise *On Letters*. I assess the nature of texts cited and the practice of citation to offer insights into the ideological alignment or intellectual position of the author as well as their education and social class. Contrary to the critique of contextualism, that placing a text in context domesticates it by creating a coherent system within which the text is totally explicable and which it cannot escape, I demonstrate that in two out of three cases, namely the *Life of Methodios* and *On Letters*, these texts 'radically upend their contexts' and that contextualisation is the very way to reveal that.[91]

The latter two kinds of contextualisation move beyond citation, and into a more tentative set of arguments *for* medieval context(s). Throughout the book I refer to this exercise as an attempt to identify a 'discursive milieu'. I use this phrase to strike a balance between recognising on the one hand that context in the medieval world was not purely textual, it could be experienced orally or more structurally through genre tropes and norms. In this way it was discursive. On the other hand, I settle on 'milieu', to insist on the fact that utterances and discourses are grounded within social environments, or milieus, and between people of varied

[91] M. Jay, 'Historical Explanation and the Event: Reflections on the Limits of Contextualisation', *New Literary History*, 42 (2011), pp. 557–71, at p. 564.

levels of access to knowledge and power.[92] In this, I side with Jameson and Spiegel on the interpretive value of material conditions as equally formative to the meaning of texts, even if, in Central and Eastern Europe in the early Middle Ages, these material conditions are not always readily available to us. To my mind, the post-structuralist efforts to abandon the loosely inter- and intrapersonal (or social) context for an object-less and dematerialised discourse have been unpersuasive, not only because they flatten the sociopolitical hierarchies of social reality, but also because they leave us with no possibility for distributing moral and ethical responsibility.[93]

The second kind of context taken into account, and the first way I seek to identify a discursive milieu is generic, and only applies to two out of three case studies in this monograph (the *Life of Cyril* and the *Life of Methodios*). This analysis is concerned with structures, types, and tropes available rather than specific texts or direct textual or interpersonal contact. I study contemporary Greek- and Latin-language hagiography to identify different discourses of sanctity available to the ninth-century hagiographer and then situate the *Life of Cyril* and the *Life of Methodios* within these contemporary conventions. In both cases, however, I move from purely generic analysis into making claims about the social and political values professed by each text in constructing the hagiographic genre in the way that it does.

The third and last kind of contextualisation, seeks to identify a discursive milieu on the basis of both intellectual and intertextual contexts, beyond the generic. This is done through the study of a range of texts in different genres which I argue are dealing with the same kinds of issues as each of my texts. This intellectual move will always be an argument to be made given the different kinds of contemporary evidence available rather than a context to be taken for granted. In the case of the *Life of Cyril* and *On Letters*, this is done firstly through identifying common discursive components available in a range of contemporary texts, such as for example the question of classical learning or the matter of translation. And then secondly through demonstrating how each of my texts engages with or subverts these components. In the *Life of Methodios*, my case is stronger, and it is *for* engagement with a specific surviving set of Latin texts. In short, I make arguments *for* what each text is trying to do, in saying what it does, and what exactly it seeks to change or affect in doing so.

More generally, studying these texts together and diachronically, this book seeks to elide the critique that contextualism necessarily 'implies a cessation or

[92] This is framed explicitly against post-structuralist concepts of the discursive sphere such as the 'enunciative field'. M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. Sheridan (London, 2002), pp. 61–5.

[93] Especially as it is framed by Foucault, in ibid.

(at the very least) a slowing down of historical time'.[94] Rather, demonstrating the changing contexts between texts which inherit the same story, about the invention of Slavonic and about Cyril, but frame and structure this story differently, I seek to stress the vibrancy and flexibility of medieval intellectual culture, and to stress 'the dynamic force field of contending contexts, both synchronous and diachronous' available in the study of medieval texts.[95]

Another way of framing the question of texts seeking to make interventions in specific intertextual and intellectual contexts, is as a matter of authors seeking to affect specific audiences. I consider the two to some extent parallel activities, and I use the language of both throughout this book. But I maintain that the identification of an author and an audience requires further argument, over and above the identification of text and context, because it transposes the texts at hand into a social space, and the inquiry into a social-historical one. I ask not simply what a text is trying to do, but why a community or individual may be trying to do that, and whether it is possible to determine if this intervention comes from a position of strength or weakness. In the words of Spiegel, I recognise that 'language subtly mirrors the social location and relative power of its speakers'.[96] In what follows I clarify how authorship and audience is conceived in this book, and how the author manifests themselves in the early Middle Ages of Central and Eastern Europe.

Author and Audience

The post-structuralist claim that the individual (author) emerged with modernity has been subject to sustained criticism, and recent work on pre-modern authorship has demonstrated a plethora of authorial modes, some of which closely resemble the self-conscious self often considered to be the product to Renaissance and post-Renaissance thinking.[97] In the early medieval context of Central and Eastern Europe, however, and especially with reference to the texts which concern this book, Michel Foucault's urge to abandon the *oeuvre* as a taxonomising category for texts, Roland Barthes' murder of the named, monolithic author, and

[94] P. Gordon, 'Contextualism and Criticism in the History of Ideas', in D. MacMahon and S. Moyn, eds., *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 32–52, at p. 36.

[95] Jay, 'Historical Explanation and the Event', p. 561.

[96] Spiegel, 'The Social Logic of the Text', p. 25.

[97] The modernity of the individual can be found for instance in the seminal: R. Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in his *Image, Music, Text*, trans. S. Heath (New York, 1977), pp. 142–8. On varied authorial discourses in the medieval west, see: R. Corradini et al., eds., *Ego Trouble: Authors and Their Identities in the Early Middle Ages* (Vienna, 2010). And in the Byzantine world: A. Pizzone, ed., *The Author in Middle Byzantine Literature: Modes, Function, and Identities* (Berlin, 2014). For one particularly self-aware Byzantine author, see: S. Papaioannou, *Michael Psellos: Rhetoric and Authorship in Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2013).

Julia Kristeva's assertion that every text is a 'mosaic of quotations', appear not so much as the well-known assault on the author in the twentieth century, but rather as an accurate description of medieval textual practice.[98]

The three texts on which this book is centred are authorless. One, *On Letters*, circulated under a dubious name, Chernorizets Krabur (literally meaning 'the brave monk') for some of its manuscript transmission but even here no extra-textual evidence survives to allow us to construct or identify a specific author. In all three cases we have no identifiable names, no biographies, no *oeuvres*. As will be discussed, this has not stopped modern scholarship from trying to pin these texts onto known figures from the period. But this rather futile effort seems to achieve little and in effect narrows the intellectual sphere of the Middle Ages. By contrast, there is something of the *tabula rasa* to this anonymous state of affairs, which can be productive. Throughout, I hold on to 'the author', maintaining that texts are to some extent the product of intentions and agency. But I recognise that 'the author' is not simply the person that the label designates, in two ways.

The first is that the author as a concept stands over and above the person it is associated with, and is analysed to some degree as an autonomous agent, with rational powers to propose arguments rather than, say, a mammal with basic physical needs.[99] Recognising this distance between the person and author, whether by calling it an 'author-function' as Foucault does or an 'author-creator' as does Bakhtin is necessary when a name like Sappho or Shakespeare hangs over a corpus.[100] In the absence of a person to attach this to, I keep to the term author, as a consciously constructed label.

The second is that the author is always already socially situated and therefore their intellectual production is shaped by the social conditions it emerged from. The state of the evidence for early medieval Central and Eastern Europe permits the conscious bypassing of the thorny question of how far exactly socio-economic conditions constrain the possibilities of individual agency, on which as noted above Spiegel, Jameson, and Skinner disagree. In the absence of any specific biographical information to be attached to the individual authors of my texts, I hold the author as intimately related to and as nearly interchangeable with what I call their 'textual community'.[101] The scarcity of our evidence makes it difficult

[98] Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, pp. 23–4; R. Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', p. 146; J. Kristeva, 'Word, Dialogue and Novel', in her *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (Columbia, 1980), pp. 64–91, at p. 66.

[99] See for instance the language in: Q. Skinner, 'Motives, Intentions and Interpretation', in his *Visions of Politics*, pp. 90–102. For a critique, see: M. Foucault, 'What Is an Author?', in his *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, trans. D. Bouchard (Cornell, 1980), pp. 113–38, at p. 122.

[100] Foucault, 'What Is an Author?', pp. 124–7; M. Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope of the Novel', in his *The Dialogic of Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. M. Holquist (Austin, TX, 1981), pp. 84–258, at pp. 253–4.

[101] The term is adapted here, but borrowed from: B. Stock, *Listening for the Text: On the Uses of the Past* (Philadelphia, PA, 1990), p. 150.

to determine if the author's position was or was not simply the hegemonic one in their community or immediate social class, and therefore whether they are expressing something 'original' or 'individual' or not. As such I use the pronoun 'they' to refer to this medieval author, both as a gender-neutral shorthand, and as a term that carries within it the potential plurality of a textual community.

Whilst I use 'textual community' to denote where a text comes from, this book also seeks to identify the targets of these texts: the context they seek to affect or their intended audience. This also has two tenets.

Throughout, the texts presented here propose arguments which seek to resolve tensions within their social worlds, not in the offensive but often in the indicative: they declare the resolution as if it were already true. In some cases, I call this a 'declaration' in the words of the linguistic philosopher John Searle, in others I say simply that they 'show' the reality they are proposing, rather than explicitly arguing for it. Both of these kinds of statements reveal the ideal audience which the texts construct within them and seek to bring into being, an audience which takes as already given the realities the texts seek to bring about.[102]

The second tenet of audience once again pulls us out of the text and into the social sphere. Ultimately, I seek to identify the 'discursive milieu', made up of social actors, that each text sought to affect. I recognise that this milieu by no means necessarily accepted the validity of the interventions proposed by our authors and their textual community. To the contrary, I often illuminate how, as far as our evidence permits, the milieus I identify, in our three cases as a Constantinopolitan-educated elite, the papal court, or a more immediate bilingual monastic circle in the Balkans, did not already share the views of the texts studied. Further, I suggest that these texts were not ultimately successful in persuading them. It is far from clear that the world views put forward by the authors or communities from which the *Life of Cyril*, the *Life of Methodios*, and *On Letters* emerged, represented the hegemonic common-sense of their contemporary sociopolitical context. This is precisely why the texts are so essential to complicating our understanding of early medieval intellectual culture but also the relationships between communities in the borderlands of cultural authority between Rome and Constantinople.

[102] My notion of an 'ideal audience' is loosely based on Umberto Eco's notion of a 'model reader'. Eco notes that a 'text is a device conceived in order to produce its model reader', and an empirical reader only 'makes conjectures about the kind of model reader postulated by the text', *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 64.

PART ONE

INVENTING SLAVONIC

1
Constantine-Cyril Today
A Critical Assessment

As alluded to in the Introduction, the body of work devoted to the study of the lives of Constantine-Cyril (henceforth Cyril) (ca. 826–69) and Methodios (ca. 815–86) and their invention of the Slavonic alphabet is almost boundless, and their legacies are intertwined with complex national myths and constructions of modern identities.[1] This is nowhere more easily demonstrated than in the twelfth-century basilica of St Clement in Rome.

An otherwise unmarked and unremarkable tomb lay amidst the damp dark corridors beneath the basilica, in the remains of its fourth-century predecessor. In 1861, following the failed attempt in 1857–8 to discover Cyril's remains, commissioned by Pope Pius IX at the request of some Slavonic bishops, the Prior of the Irish Dominican community, Fr Joseph Mulloy, discovered an empty receptacle at the end of the south wall of the fourth-century basilica, just before the staircase leading to the Mithraic area which he would discover later.[2] Even though the tomb was found empty, and the textual evidence is far from unambiguous concerning its supposed location in the church, it was identified as the burial place of Constantine-Cyril, the philosopher and inventor of the Slavonic alphabet.[3] This interpretation was perhaps assisted by the imminent celebrations, in Rome, of the millennium since the conversion of the Slavs.[4] Subsequently, over the course of

[1] A pertinent example of the sheer volume of work is the attempt at a systematic bibliography of Cyrillo-Methodian studies which started in the 1930s. Three full volumes of bibliography were printed in the twentieth century for the periods 1516–1934, 1934–40, and 1940–80. Two reprints have since updated gaps in the former two volumes. This leaves us with five volumes of bibliography *prior* to 1980. G. A. Il'inskii, ed., *Opyt sistematicheskoi kirilomefodievskoi bibliografii* (Sofia, 1934). This was updated and reprinted as: S. Nikolova, ed., *Kirilo-Metodievska bibliografiia, 1516–1934* (Sofia, 2003). *Kirilometodievska bibliografiia za 1934–40 god* (Sofia, 1942) was updated and reprinted as: S. Nikolova, ed., *Kirilo-Metodievska bibliografiia, 1934–44* (Sofia, 2010). The last volume remains un-updated. I. Duichev et al., eds., *Kirilometodievska bibliografiia, 1940–1980* (Sofia, 1983). For an example of their legacy and its role in national identity, see, for instance: S. Nikolova and P. Zheniuh, eds., *Kirilo-Methodievskoto kulturno nasledstvo i natsionalnata identichnost* (Sofia, 2011).

[2] L. E. Boyle, 'The Site of the Tomb of St. Cyril in the Lower Basilica of San Clemente, Rome', in E. G. Farrugia et al., eds., *Christianity among the Slavs: The Heritage of Saints Cyril and Methodios* (Rome, 1988), pp. 75–81, at p. 76.

[3] On the hunt of the actual remains of Cyril: L. E. Boyle, 'The Fate of the Remains of St Cyril', in L. Dempsey, ed., *San Clemente Miscellany II*, vol. 2: *Art & Archaeology* (Rome, 1978), pp. 75–81, at pp. 13–35. An alternative reading of the location of the tomb, given by the sources as 'ad dexteram partem altaris' was not proposed until the late twentieth century. See: J. Osborne, *Early Medieval Wall-Paintings in the Lower Church of San Clemente, Rome* (New York, 1984).

[4] Boyle, 'The Site of the Tomb of St. Cyril', p. 77.

Inventing Slavonic: Cultures of Writing between Rome and Constantinople. Mirela Ivanova, Oxford University Press.
 DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780198891505.003.0002

the twentieth century, the tomb was adorned with monuments of thanks to the 'apostle of the Slavic people' from the governments and people of Slovakia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Ukraine, Russia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Poland. Today, leaders of Slavonic-speaking countries make regular visits to the tomb when in Rome.[5] Meanwhile, in 1980, Pope John Paul II declared Cyril and Methodios co-patron saints of Europe, together with Benedict of Nursia.

But this pan-Slavic celebration of the Cyrillo-Methodian mission, and papal desire that the brothers unite what was at the time a Cold War-torn Europe, have coexisted in tension with the exclusively nationalised readings of the mission. Various countries' claims to Cyril and Methodios as their own have regularly produced geopolitical controversy. On 24 May 2017, the official Day of the Slavonic Alphabet and Culture, Vladimir Putin said to the Macedonian president that 'the Slavic alphabet and literature came to us from Macedonian soil'.[6] This caused enough uproar to lead to Russian minister and chess player Anatolii Karpov's public clarification. Karpov insisted that 'in Russia we know that the Cyrillic alphabet came from Byzantium'.[7] This caused more tension in turn and led the then Prime Minister of Bulgaria, Boiko Borisov to cancel a meeting with Karpov, who had travelled to Bulgaria to meet with the head of state, citing his statements about the alphabet as the reason for doing so.[8]

More recently, in November 2020, the Bulgarian government sent a memorandum to the European Union blocking the proposed entry of the Republic of North Macedonia into the Union due to their supposed 'problems with history'.[9] One of the documents produced to support this problem thesis was a pamphlet written by over a dozen scholars and published by the Bulgarian Academy of Science, entitled *On the Official Language of North Macedonia*.[10] The pamphlet

[5] 'Macedonian Delegation Attends Service of Intercession on St Cyril's Tomb in Rome, 24 May 2012, https://vlada.mk/node/3254?ln=en-gb (last accessed: September 2023); 'PM Petkov Pays Tribute at the Tomb of St Cyril in Rome' 23 May 2022 https://bnr.bg/en/post/101651108 http://www.op.org/en/content/bulgaria-president-visits-st-cyril-tomb-dominican-basilica-san-clemente-rome (last accessed: September 2023). 'Macedonian and Bulgarian Delegation in Front of St Cyril Plaque in Rome', 25 May 2023, https://skopjediem.com/2023/05/25/macedonian-and-bulgarian-delegation-in-front-of-st-cyril-plaque-in-rome/ (last accessed: September 2023).

[6] M. Theresheva, 'Putin's Homage to Cyrillic Makes Bulgarians See Red', 25 May 2017, http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/kremlin-s-stance-on-cyrillic-origin-angers-sofia-05-25-2017 (last accessed: September 2023).

[7] 'Anatolii Karpov v Bolgarii: v Rosii my znaem, chto kirillitsa prishla iz Vizantii', 19 June 2017, http://www.novinite.ru/articles/26221/Анатолий+Карпов+в+Болгарии%3A+В+России+мы+знаем%2C+что+кириллица+пришла+из+Византии (last accessed: September 2023).

[8] V. Aleksandrova, 'Nov rund: Kirilitsata—ot Vizantiia? Borisov vurna Karpov ot MS', 19 June 2017, http://www.dnes.bg/politika/2017/06/19/nov-rund-kirilicata-ot-vizantiia-borisov-vyrna-karpov-ot-ms.344771 (last accessed: September 2023).

[9] 'Bulgaria Blocks EU Membership Talks with North Macedonia', 17 November 2020, https://www.dw.com/en/bulgaria-blocks-eu-membership-talks-with-north-macedonia/a-55641332 (last accessed: January 2021).

[10] *On the Official Language of the Republic of North Macedonia*, Bulgarian Academy of Science (Sofia, 2020).

argued that the language of North Macedonia is a dialect of Bulgarian, and its opening chapter was devoted entirely to a reading of the invention of the alphabet, and an argument as to why Cyril and Methodios (born in Thessaloniki) spoke Bulgarian.[11] Within a month, the Czech and Slovak republics had issued a public statement saying they would not accept disputes about history as a criterion for entry to the European Union.[12] Their statement was no doubt influenced by the fact that the two republics disagree with Bulgaria on the origins of the alphabet, but also with each other.

Thus, there are two contradictory aspects of the figure of memory formed around Cyril and his invention of the alphabet: the unifying pan-Slavic nature of the brothers' mission on the one hand and the nationally specific claims to their origins on the other. Both of these aspects have a dialectical relationship with our medieval texts, *Life of Cyril* (henceforth, *VC*) and the *Life of Methodios* (henceforth *VM*).[13]

Firstly, there are ways of reading these texts and ways of understanding medieval ethnicity which lend themselves both to nationalist-serving or pan-European agendas. For instance, the Slavonic alphabet was only transmitted to Russia from Macedonian soil, if we accept that medieval Ohrid—one of the two known centres producing Slavonic-language texts in the tenth century—was in some transcendental sense 'Macedonian', regardless of the political authority it was under at the time (in this case medieval Bulgarian).

Secondly, these readings have then transcended scholarship and become common-sense statements uttered on the political stage, and manifested in various state- and church-sponsored rituals and institutions. For instance, every year on 24 May, the pan-Orthodox Day of the Slavonic Alphabet and Culture, celebrations of the two brothers are staged across the Orthodox world (see Figure 2).

[11] Ibid., pp. 9–10.

[12] S. Marusic, 'Czechs, Slovaks reject Bulgaria's "Historical Twist" to Enlargement Criteria', 18 December, https://balkaninsight.com/2020/12/18/czecks-slovaks-reject-bulgarias-historical-twist-to-enlargement-criteria/ (last accessed: September 2023).

[13] *Life of Constantine-Cyril* (henceforth *VC*). No recent critical edition of the *VC* exists, so I have referred to a number of editions when citing the text. The main two are: F. Grivec and F. Tomšič, eds., *Constantinus et Methodius Thessalonicenses: Fontes* (Zagreb, 1960), pp. 95–143, and Kliment Okhridski, *Subrani Suchineniia*, eds. B. Angelov and Kh. Kodov, vol. 3 (Sofia, 1973) pp. 30–159. When citing the text, I opt for the morphology of Grivec and Tomšič for orthographic ease as well as their numbering of lines, which is absent in Angelov and Kodov's edition. I have also referred to Christiano Diddi's series of critical editions of individual manuscript traditions, especially the South Slavic ones. These have been published in preparation for Diddi's full critical edition of the *VC*, which is still forthcoming. They can be found in his articles in *Richerche slavistiche*, published between 2004 and 2013, under the title 'Materiali e ricerche per l'edizione critica di Vita Constantini. I–XI'. Generally, the editions do not disagree on word choice, but often on morphology. In the rare instance that these differences are significant to my argument, I cite the variants in a footnote. I have referred to both Russian and Bulgarian language translations of the text, but all renderings into English are my own. *Life of Methodios* (henceforth *VM*), 1–2. As with the *VC*, I have referred to both the Grivec and Tomšič, and Angelov and Kodov's editions. Once again, I use the morphology of Grivec and Tomšič's edition for ease, as well as the numbering of both sections and sentences. Kliment, *Subrani*, vol. 3, pp. 185–92. Grivec and Tomšič, *Constantinus et Methodius*, pp. 145–67.

Figure 2 Cyril and Methodios in Cross Procession, Novosibirsk, Russia, 2005. Testus/ Wikipedia

Despite its notionally international reach, each celebration manifests in profoundly national ways. In 2022, the Red Square in Moscow was full for a free concert, where an orchestra performed songs by Russian composers, sung by choirs dressed in Russian folk dress, and the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia addressed the audience under large posters of the two brothers on stage.[14] Meanwhile a military band paraded through the streets of Sofia led by an icon of Cyril and Methodios, concluding with a number of speeches by the president and major cultural figures, as well as recitals of nationalist poetry in front of the Saints Cyril and Methodios National Library of Bulgaria (see Figure 3). The event was also used as the celebratıon of the 130th anniversary of a nationalist Bulgarian hymn written to celebrate the liberation of the Bulgarian Kingdom from Ottoman rule. The ceremonial readings in front of the library were followed by an attempt to set a world record for the largest number of people singing along to this hymn.[15]

The claims to Cyril and Methodios in these ephemeral celebrations are sustained by more stable state institutions. The university of 'Saints Cyril and Methodios' can be found in Skopje, Macedonia; Veliko Turnovo, Bulgaria; Travne, Slovakia;

[14] 'V Rossii s razmakhom otmetiat Den' slavianskoi pis'mennosti i kul'tury' 17 May 2022 https://www.vesti.ru/article/2746333, https://www.mos.ru/news/item/40528073/ (last accessed: September 2023).

[15] 'Opit za rekord v Sofiia na 24 Mai', 24 May 2022, https://news.bg/society/opit-za-rekord-v-sofiya-za-24-may.html (last accessed: September 2023).

Figure 3 National Library of Bulgaria, SS Cyril and Methodios. Dennis Jarvis/ Wikipedia

and in Minsk, Belarus, where it is the name of the theology institute of the main national university (See Figure 4).[16] These universities carry significant cultural weight, but national claims to the Apostles to the Slavs are also sustained by countless smaller institutions and monuments. Cyril and Methodios can be found: in the 'Cyril and Methodios' primary school in Belgrade, Serbia; another in Bitola, Macedonia; the 'Cyril and Methodios' Orthodox Cathedral in Prague, the Czech Republic; the 'Cyril and Methodios' Library in Prijedor, Bosnia and Herzegovina; depicted on the modern Bulgarian passport page and in countless statue monuments across the region, for instance in Tver', Murmansk, Sevastopol', Kolomna, and Moscow in Russia alone.[17] Cyril and Methodios as both Apostles to all Slavs on the one hand, but as firmly nationally situated on the other, are nearly ubiquitous in the Central and Eastern European Slavonic-speaking landscape.

[16] 'Univerzitet Sv Kiril i Metodij vo Skopije', http://www.ukim.edu.mk/ (last accessed: September 2023); 'Univerzita sv. Cyrila a Metoda v Travne', https://www.ucm.sk/ (last accessed: September 2023); 'Veliko turnovski universitet sv. sv. Kiril i Metodii', http://www.uni-vt.bg/bul/ (last accessed: September 2023); 'Institut teologii imeni sviatykh Mefodiia i Kirilla', https://www.theology.bsu.by (last accessed: September 2023).

[17] 'Osnovna shkola Ćirilo I Metodije, Beograd', http://www.oscirilo.edu.rs/index.php?jezik=sr&strana=naslovna (last accessed: September 2023); 'Osnovno uchilishte Sv. Kiril i Metodij, Bitola', https://oukimbt.webs.com/ (last accessed: September 2023); 'Římskokatolická farnost sv. Cyrila a Metoděje, Praha', https://farnost-karlin.cz/cz/ (last accessed: September 2023); 'Narodna biblioteka Ćirilo I Metodije, Prijedor', https://www.bibliotekaprijedor.com/ (last accessed: September 2023); 'Pamiatniki Kirillu i Mefodiiu v Rossii', https://moskray.livejournal.com/385302.html (last accessed: September 2023).

Figure 4 University of Skopje, SS Cyril and Methodios, North Macedonia. BuildMk/ Wikipedia

Thirdly, in this dialectical cycle, the contemporary ubiquity of the brothers (although originally emerging from particular readings of medieval texts) in turn shapes and conditions scholars' preconceptions about the Cyrillo-Methodian mission and thus feeds back into their (our) re-readings of these texts. This is the context within which we are always already embroiled when approaching Cyril as a man. Scholarship largely accepts the first premise, that Cyril and Methodios were first and foremost apostles to the Slavs. The second, the nationalisation of the brothers, then produces various scholarly disputes about their origins, and the location of the authorship of texts about them (in Moravia, proposed by Czech scholars, or in Bulgaria or Macedonia proposed by the respective academies).[18]

[18] For Czech scholars locating the *VC* in an exclusively Moravian circle and set of aims, see for instance: V. Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy Konstantina a Metoděje* (Prague, 1963), p. 83 (*VC*), p. 85 (*VM*). The Bulgarian Academy of Science attributes the *VC* to the Cyrillo-Methodian disciple Clement of Ohrid who ultimately works under the Bulgarian tsar. The most recent monograph on Clement from Bulgaria calls him a Slav 'of the Bulgarian type'. More recently still, a major edited volume calls him the founder of the 'old Bulgarian language'. Kliment, *Subrani*, vol. 3, pp. 8–9; I. Iliev, *Kliment Okhridski: zhivot i delo* (Plovdiv, 2010), pp. 35–7; Kuiumdzieva and Totomanova, eds., *Sv. Kliment Okrhidski v kulturata na evropa*, p. 12. Clement is accepted as a Macedonian in the two most recent volumes from Macedonia, the second of which opens with an address from the president of Macedonia, which is followed by an introduction by the mayor of Ohrid. The mayor describes Clement as 'our forefather, the pillar of the Macedonian people'. T. Stojanovski, 'Za duhovnata dramaturgija vo pouchnite Slova Klimentovi', in I. Zarov, ed., *Sveti Kliment Ohridski vo Umetnichkoto Tvoreshtvo* (Skopje, 2012),

This is not to say that scholars' arguments are reducible entirely to national loyalties. National academies are always heterotopic spaces which sustain various contradicting opinions, but there are always certain national-hegemonic opinions to be found in them.[19] Regardless, it is not the second conception, the nationalised Cyril and Methodios, that concerns me here. I am neither the first nor the last to point out some of the absurdities that such disputes have produced in the service of nation-building.[20] Rather, and more innovatively, in the chapters that follow I seek to take issue with the former, ubiquitous assumption that Cyril in particular was first and foremost an apostle to the Slavs by offering a new reading of the *VC*. As noted in the Introduction, it is my contention that the sociopolitical landscape and its rich saturation with Cyril and Methodian celebration and memorabilia in Central and Eastern Europe has fossilised some of the most basic assumptions about the alphabet's invention, and in doing so has produced, what Geary calls a 'moment of primary acquisition' which exists almost 'outside the domain of history'. In the two chapters that follow, I seek to put Cyril and the alphabet back into historical processes. In the three chapters beyond, I do the same for Methodios.

pp. 53–7; 'Address of Mr Nikola Bakraceski, Mayor of Ohrid', in T. Fiti ed., *Sveti Kliment Okhridski, 916–2016: Svecheno odbelezhuvanje na 1100-godishninata od upokojuvanjeto* (Skopje, 2017), p. 36.

[19] For example, over twenty Bulgarian scholars, myself included, signed an open letter in opposition to Bulgaria blocking North Macedonia's entry to the EU, calling for new ways of approaching history which are not essentialist and nationalist in their readings of the past. See: N. Lalov, '"Evropa ne ni razbira" Bulgarski ucheni poiskakha novo istorichesko mislene za Severna Makedoniia', 5 October 2020, https://www.mediapool.bg/evropa-ne-ni-razbira-balgarski-ucheni-poiskaha-novo-istorichesko-mislene-za-severna-makedoniya-news312809.html (last accessed: September 2023).

[20] A plethora of examples of this can be found in: S. Rohdewald, *Sacralizing the Nation through Remembrance of Medieval Religious Figures in Serbia, Bulgaria and Macedonia* (Leiden, 2022).

2

The *Life of Constantine-Cyril*

A New Reading

When it comes to Cyril, scholarship mostly concurs with the aforementioned popular celebration of the invention of Slavonic. Statues, political speeches, and academic textbooks all agree that Cyril was an apostle to the Slavs, that his invention of the alphabet was his most important achievement, and, less explicitly, that this invention was somehow at odds with his Byzantine background. In the words of one of the most established scholars on the *VC* and *VM*, Cyril's idea to invent the alphabet 'was unprecedented and revolutionary in its implications: it was incomprehensible to his contemporaries in the West and to his peers in Byzantium, with their arrogant conviction of cultural superiority towards everything non-Hellenic'.[1] At the heart of this defence of the revolutionary and un-Byzantine nature of Cyril is the acceptance of the invention of Slavonic as an act of ethnic liberation for Slavs. The value of the Slavonic alphabet in modern political discourse has projected immense value onto Cyril, its inventor, as a liberator, and basic assumptions about the monolithic simplicity of identity have ensured that in order to liberate the Slavs, Cyril has had to turn away from his own Byzantine background.[2]

The impact of this contemporary and politicised image of Cyril on the *VC* as a text has been profound. It is assumed almost universally: that the text itself is primarily about Cyril's invention of the Slavonic alphabet, his greatest achievement; that it is primarily a defence of this act; and finally that all other activity in the text is in some way subordinated to this eventual invention. In a thorough recent study of the papal politics of Cyril and Methodios' mission to Moravia published in 2014, Maddalena Betti notes that the *VC* had two aims. The first was:

[1] V. Vavřínek, 'The Puzzle of the Cyrillo-Methodian Mission', *Byzantinoslavica*, 75 (2017), pp. 70–98, at p. 78. See also: S. Nikolova, 'The Moravian Mission: A Successful and an Unsuccessful Result of the Activity of Sts. Cyril and Methodius', in A. Tachiaos, ed., *Cyril and Methodius: Byzantium and the World of the Slavs* (Thessaloniki 2015), pp. 58–75, at p. 74.

[2] More nuanced assessments of Cyril as an explicitly Byzantine diplomat still recognise him as 'completely unique', for believing that 'all peoples were worthy of baptism and that all languages were created as equal', or highly unusual in his 'spirit of friendliness'. S. Ivanov, 'Cyril and Methodius among Byzantine Missionaries: Common Features and Unique Reality', in P. Kouřil, ed., *The Cyril and Methodios Mission and Europe: 1150 Years Since the Arrival of the Thessaloniki Brothers in Great Moravia* (Brno, 2014), pp. 200–2, at p. 201; I. Ševčenko, 'Three Paradoxes of the Cyrillo-Methodian Mission', *Slavic Review*, 23 (1964), pp. 220–36, at p. 226.

Inventing Slavonic: Cultures of Writing between Rome and Constantinople. Mirela Ivanova, Oxford University Press.
 DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780198891505.003.0003

> to define the holiness of Constantine by representing the life of this New Apostle who participated in the process of redemption thus showing the Slavs the way to salvation through the will of God. The second aim was to defend the Slavic alphabet, the Slavonic translation of the Holy Scriptures and the Slavonic liturgy. The Slavic language which was consecrated by the saintliness of Constantine was the main theme of the *Life of Constantine*.[3]

This hegemonic view is not too dissimilar from the conclusion of Vladimir Vavřínek's 1963 monograph and the most thorough study to-date of the *VC* as a literary text:

> Hlavním cílem ŽK bulo dokázat, že Konstantin byl bohem vyvolený světec, nadaný od něho mimořádnou učeností a moudrostí, který byl přímo předurčen pro působení na Moravě, a že proto jeho dílo—zavedení slovanského liturgického písemnictví—plně odpovídalo zájmům církve i učení Písma.[4]
>
> The main aim of the *VC* was to prove that Constantine was a saint by the will of God, and was granted with extraordinary learning and wisdom by him, and that he was predestined to work in Moravia, and that his work—the introduction of Slavonic liturgical literature—fully corresponded to the Church's interests and the teachings of Scripture.

Both of these positions take it as a given that even if we accept the *VC* as in some sense a Byzantine hagiography in form and style, its purpose or argument was a Slavonic one, this is the 'first original written Slavonic text' ('první staroslověnsky napisané původni dílo').[5]

This reading is totally obvious if viewed from the richly saturated landscape of Cyrillo-Methodian memorabilia in Central and Eastern Europe. But it may be somewhat startling to a reader approaching the text with no prior knowledge of the subsequent spread of Slavonic. The *VC* is made up of roughly twenty pages of A4 in a modern printed edition, of which a mere two deal with Slavonic: one page with the letter of Rastislav, the Moravian ruler, to Michael, asking for a teacher and the invention, and another page devoted to Cyril's time in Moravia.[6] As calculated by Vavřínek himself, over half (fifty-four per cent) of the text is taken up by cited disputations between Cyril and Jews, Muslims, Latins, heretics, or pagans.[7] Eight full pages of the text discuss the invitation of the Khazar ruler,

[3] M. Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia (858–882): Papal Power and Political Reality* (Leiden, 2014), p. 76.
[4] V. Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy Konstantina a Metoděje* (Prague, 1963), p. 81.
[5] Ibid., p. 53.
[6] Printed on A4 in Kliment, *Subrani*, vol. 3, pp. 89–109, dealing with the alphabet: 14, pp. 104–5. 15, pp. 105–6.
[7] Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, p. 66.

Cyril's travels to Khazaria and his disputation at the Khazar court with Jewish scholars and men said to know a lot about Islam.[8] The disputation alone covers six pages.[9] In sheer volume, this section is clearly the centrepiece of the text. Another potential centrepiece, at least as prominent as the invention of the alphabet, is the discovery and translation of the relics of Pope Clement, which Cyril finds in the Crimea on his route to Khazaria. The discovery, celebration of the relics in Rome, and the decision to bury Cyril in the Basilica of St Clement take up roughly a page of text altogether, but as they conclude the text, one could easily make the case that this is the culmination of Cyril's life's work.[10] After Cyril has taken the relics to Rome, he is buried by the pope with all the Greeks and Romans processing in his honour, unlike his brother in the *VM* who is celebrated in Latin, Greek, and Slavonic.[11]

It is by no means clear, on viewing its varied and disparate contents, that the text understands Cyril primarily as an inventor of the Slavonic alphabet, or that it considers this his teleological destiny.[12] Rather it is clear, that Cyril is primarily an inventor of the Slavonic alphabet, for modern historians and national institutions, to whom the Slavonic alphabet holds much more value than the relics of St Clement or a long disputation treatise against Judaism.

As discussed in the Introduction, contextualisation is a multifaceted activity. Already-assumed contexts are hard to untangle from the contexts which emerge more organically from close investigations of texts. It is my aim, as far as possible, to avoid superimposing the contemporary image of Cyril onto the medieval texts. Moreover, I will refrain from commenting on Cyril's own ethnicity, the historicity of his deeds, or his personal character (for instance, what one scholar speculates to be 'his love of anonymity […] and his love for adventure').[13] Rather, the following chapter offers a textual study of the *VC*. By withholding interest in illuminating Cyril as a man, this chapter seeks to better illuminate the *VC* as a text and as an argument. I am interested in how authorial agency organises and structures the ideological positions found in the text. I ask *what* the text is arguing and *who* it is arguing with.

[8] Kliment, *Subrani*, vol. 3, pp. 95–103. [9] Ibid., bottom of pp. 96–103.
[10] Ibid., pp. 96, 107–9. [11] *VC*, 18.14. *VM*, 17.11.
[12] He is only referred to as such in the very first introductory paragraph of the text, which differs significantly in tone and voice from the rest of the *VC*. It uses the first-person plural 'we' and describes Cyril as a teacher sent to enlighten 'our language' ('ѥзыкъ нашь'). This is at odds with the third person narration, and general Byzantine imperialism of the text, which 'others' and caricatures Slavs and non-Romans. This imperialism will be discussed at more length below. This opening paragraph is clearly a later addition. *VC*, 1.1–4.
[13] T. Butler, 'Saint Constantine-Cyril's "Sermon on the Translation of the Relics of Saint Clement of Rome"', *Cyrillomethodianum*, 17–18 (1993–4), pp. 15–40, at p. 21. See, for instance, the claim that the brothers were actually Bulgarian: A. Margaritov-Hofer et al., *Za Kiril i Metodii* (Sofia, 1999). The best summary of debates on the historicity of the text, and of Cyril as a person: Floria, *Skazaniia o nachale slavianskoi pis'mennosti* (2nd ed., St Petersburg, 2000), pp. 1–157.

The starting point of this study is the work, amongst others, of Ihor Ševčenko, who has insisted that, albeit surviving in Slavonic, the lives of Cyril and Methodios 'are Byzantine documents', they 'glorify two Byzantines' and which 'rest in part on Byzantine texts written in Greek'.[14] But I wish to go further than simply revealing the Greek sources for packages of information found in the *VC* or generic hagiographic tropes manifested in the text.[15] I part with the bulk of scholarship by not assuming the text to be a 'Slavonic' text, in the sense that either it promotes a Slavonic agenda, is 'imbued with a strong Slavic patriotism', or that it is in some ways written *for* the Slavs.[16] Instead, I begin by assessing the text and the authorial world view from which it emerged, by taking as given that the text unequivocally evokes a world which centred around and sourced its legitimacy from Byzantium, and that it propagates a Byzantine imperial agenda.[17]

As such, this chapter seeks to demonstrate how the text engages and argues with explicitly Byzantine intellectual problems, and does so using Byzantine hagiographical, rhetorical, and grammatical texts. In short, this chapter seeks to reveal how the author of the *VC* positions themselves within these intellectual currents, and how by doing so the text presents an argument *for* certain kinds of education, and *for* their use in certain kinds of missionary activity.

To make this argument, the chapter is divided into three parts. The first focuses on the evidence for the integration of the *VC* in the corpus of Byzantine literature in general, and Byzantine hagiography in particular. More specifically, it highlights how the use of Byzantine materials is not simply decorative but crucial to the formation of the argument of the text. To do this I focus on the authorial formation of a definition of philosophy, which stresses the use of philosophical understanding or education, in the performance of 'deeds' or actions.

I then turn to how the text itself realises this definition in two ways.[18] The second part of the chapter, 'Cyril's Education', is a study of how the text portrays Cyril as student, language learner, and alphabet 'creator'. The third,

[14] I. Ševčenko, 'Religious Missions Seen from Byzantium', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 12–13 (1988–9), pp. 7–27, at p. 13. Also acknowledged in: Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, pp. 56–65. S. Ivanov, *'Pearls before Swine': Missionary Work in Byzantium*, trans. D. Hoffman (Paris, 2015), p. 91.

[15] E.g. I. Ševčenko, 'The Greek Source of the Inscription on Solomon's Chalice in the Vita Constantini', in *To Honor Roman Jakobson on his Seventieth Birthday, 11 October 1966* (Paris, 1967), pp. 1806–18. Tropes: Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, pp. 56–65.

[16] D. Obolensky, 'Father Francis Dvornik', *Harvard Slavic Studies*, 2 (1954), pp. 1–9, at p. 5.

[17] This Byzantine agenda has already been noted but remains at odds with the commonplace understanding of what the text is about, and so has not trickled into much of the scholarship. In the very same journal issue where Obolensky asserts the lives are imbued with Slavonic patriotism, we find an article arguing to the contrary—, that is, that the texts reveal standard Byzantine thought about imperial rule. See: M. Anastos, 'Political Theory in the Lives of the Slavic Saints Constantine and Methodios', *Harvard Slavic Studies*, 2 (1954), pp. 11–38. Also noted in: L. E. Havlík, 'Roman Universalism and 9th-Century Moravia', *Cyrillomethodianum*, 2 (1972–3), pp. 14–22.

[18] Some of this analysis has already appeared in my journal article, M. Ivanova, 'Re-thinking the Life of Constantine-Cyril the Philosopher', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 98 (2019), pp.434–463.

'Cyril's Disputations', explores the consequences of this learning in the portrayal of his deeds, or actual disputations. I focus on three major disputations in depth, exploring authorial rhetorical strategies, the controlled choice of content, and more importantly, the overarching structure of the arrangement of the disputes. I argue that Cyril's three phases of learning, and the three major disputations it prepares him for, form a significant and controlled narrative structure. I also maintain that in all disputes, the author shows Cyril utilising his rhetorical education in subtler ways. The saint is seen ordering and structuring debates in different ways—whether syllogistic, scriptural, or other—to suit different audiences. At times his statements contradict each other, because different disputes occur in different phases of the history of Christianity, rather than simply in different stages of his life as presented in the *VC*.

Whilst debating with Jews, Muslims, and Latins forms the performative and demonstrative aspect of the text, it is only the pagans or the non-Abrahamic peoples that Cyril moves to conversion. Therefore, even though heathen peoples may not be given the opportunity to formulate argumentation, the *VC* leaves no doubt as to the effectiveness of Cyril's education in persuading them, and thus offers a strong defence of 'outside' knowledge in missionary activity. Before jumping into the text, what follows is a short summary of its contents and its dating to guide the reader.

The *VC* is earlier and longer than the *VM*, which clearly used the *VC* as a source.[19] The text survives in full in forty-eight Slavonic manuscripts of the (late) fifteenth century or later, which come from both East Slavonic (modern-day Russia and Ukraine) and South Slavonic (i.e. various Balkan) redactions.[20] Despite the late attestations, it seems clear that the *VC* is in fact a very old text. It records the death of Cyril as February 869, which acts as a *terminus post quem*.[21] The *terminus ante quem* is defined by the *VM*. Methodios is generally accepted as dying in 885, on the basis of evidence contained in a papal letter by Stephen V to the Moravian Kniaz Sviatopluk concerning his death, but it is not explicitly stated in his *vita*.[22] It is clear that the *VM* was composed before the expulsion of Methodios' followers from Moravia. This occurred not long after Methodios' death but is not mentioned by the *VM*. The expulsion is itself not dated specifically but most probably occurred around the time of the 890 papal ban of the Slavonic liturgy by Stephen V and certainly by the time of the arrival of the

[19] This will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 2.

[20] Kliment, *Subrani*, vol. 3, pp. 34–45.

[21] *VC*, 18.13.

[22] For instance: G. Soulis, 'The Legacy of Cyril and Methodius to the Southern Slavs', *Dumbarton Oak Papers*, 19 (1965), pp. 19–43, at p. 21; F. Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions Among the Slavs: SS Cyril and Methodios* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1970), p. 187; and Stephen V, *Letters*, 1, in *Stephani V: Papae epistolae*, ed. G. Laehr, in *MGH*, Epp. VII (Epistolae Karolini Aevi, V), (Weidmann, 1974), pp. 354–65, at pp. 354–8.

Hungarians and collapse of the Moravian polity between 905 and 908.[23] Thus, the *VM* must be written sometime between 885 and 905 at the latest. The *VC* therefore was probably written sometime in the earlier half of the period spanning 869 to 905, and given what I argue to be its profoundly Byzantine preoccupations, perhaps as early as 869–70 in Rome, prior to the arrival of Methodios as bishop to Moravia and the consolidation of papal patronage for the mission.[24]

At a total of twenty A4 pages, the text begins with a preface which is profoundly different in tone to the rest of the text, and which I omit from my analysis. It opens with the customary hagiographical prayer and introduces Cyril as a teacher who 'enlightened our people' ('prosvieti ezik' nash'). As I will discuss in the chapters to come, it is my contention that the *VC* was written in Greek, and nowhere in the body text do we get the sense given by this preface that 'we' are the Slavonic people and not the Byzantines. This preface is clearly a later addition, and may be the work of the text's Slavonic translator: what it shows, is that already by its addition, we see the formation of Cyril's myth as enlightener of the Slavs as an ethnic group, which I discussed in the previous chapter. As I will show in the chapters to come, this idea only begins to be formulated in the *VM*, and later ninth century, and is articulated once again but differently in *On Letters*. It seems most probable that the translation into Slavonic also dates to this later stage of the mythologisation of Cyril. The saint's life proper begins with Cyril's birth in Thessaloniki, and it offers some details about his family's rank.[25] Then follows the saint's move to Constantinople for education with Photios, who is not mentioned as Patriarch of Constantinople but only as a teacher, and Leo the Grammarian. The saint is appointed as librarian of the Patriarchal library, but runs away from this position, retreating to a monastery.[26] When he is found, he returns to Constantinople and has a short disputational encounter with iconoclast patriarch John VII.[27] After this, the emperor sends him on his first diplomatic mission to the Abbasid court to dispute with Muslim scholars.[28] This dispute is given at length in the text, after which Cyril heads to Mount Olympus to visit his brother, but the retreat is interrupted by his second mission.[29] The emperor sends Cyril to Khazaria, and on his way Cyril learns a number of languages, and discovers the relics of Pope Clement in the Crimea.[30] At the Khazar court, a full dispute is performed and given between Cyril and some Jewish scholars, and men who are said to know about Islam.[31] After returning to Constantinople once again and deciphering a message

[23] Stephen V, *Register*, 33, in *Fragmenta registri Stephani V. papae*, ed. E. Caspar, in *MGH*, Epp. VII (Epistolae Karolini Aevi V), (Weidmann, 1974), pp. 334–53, at pp. 352–3. Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *De administrando imperii*, in Konstantin Bagrianorodnyi, *Ob Upravlenii imperiei*, eds., trans. G. G. Litavrin and A. P. Novosel'tsev (Moscow, 1989), 41.

[24] Dvornik speculates that Methodios' appointment was as early as the end of 869, *Byzantine Missions*, p. 151.

[25] *VC*, 1–2. [26] Ibid., 3–4. [27] Ibid., 4–5.

[28] Ibid., 6. [29] Ibid., 8. [30] Ibid. [31] Ibid., 9–13.

on a mysterious chalice, Cyril is sent on a mission by the emperor again, this time to Moravia at the request of the local ruler Rastislav.[32] He invents the Slavonic alphabet and heads there. After some time in Moravia, Cyril goes to Venice and has a dispute with Latin priests and bishops who oppose the use of any non-sacred languages for scripture (namely not Greek, Latin, or Hebrew).[33] Cyril is then called to Rome where Pope Hadrian welcomes him, gladly receives the relics of Pope Clement, and blesses books in Slavonic. Not long after, the saint sheds Constantine and accepts Cyril as his monastic name, before he dies in Rome.

The *Life of Cyril* as Byzantine Literature

For all its ubiquity in Slavonic studies, the *VC* has largely been omitted from studies of Byzantine hagiography in the ninth century.[34] It has also not been discussed in other areas of Byzantine studies to which it has much to contribute. As noted, Cyril's disputations with Jews, Muslims, Venetians, and the like make up over half of the text (fifty-six per cent), yet studies of rhetoric in the Middle-Byzantine period leave Cyril unmentioned.[35] Studies of the text by Slavists or Byzantino-Slavists have, to the contrary, continued to illuminate the varied ways in which the text participates in Byzantine literary norms and motifs.

I will only point to two moments in the text, which locate the *VC* firmly in the Byzantine literary tradition, and in particular in a Constantinopolitan intellectual circle. The first is the discovery of a Greek prototype text for the inscription Cyril deciphers on the so-called chalice of Solomon. When in Constantinople, Cyril is said to have deciphered a chalice of precious stone found in the Hagia Sophia and written in Jewish and Samaritan letters.[36] An almost word-for-word Greek version of the lines on the chalice with no reference to Cyril was found by Ševčenko in an eleventh-century manuscript.[37] It is clear, therefore, that the story of the

[32] Ibid., 14. [33] Ibid., 15 (Moravia), 16 (Venice).

[34] Cyril is nowhere to be found in the *Dumbarton Oaks Database of Byzantine Hagiography*. No mention is made of him in the chapter on 'Hagiography from the "Dark Age" to the Age of Symeon Metaphrastes', in S. Efthymiadis, ed., *Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, vol. 1: *Periods and Places* (Farnham, 2011), pp. 95–142. The only mention of Cyril in the two volumes of the Ashgate Companion is in I. Lunde's short article on 'Slavic hagiography', ibid., pp. 369–84. Somewhat ironically, Lunde stresses that early Slavic hagiography is better considered within Byzantine conventions rather than as a unique phenomenon which originates '*ex nihilo*', even though the volume suggests the opposite by its separation into a 'Slavic' chapter. Also omitted in: A.-M. Talbot, 'Hagiography', in E. Jeffreys et al., eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 862–71; I. Ševčenko, 'Hagiography of the Iconoclast Period', in A. Bryer and J. Herrin, eds., *Iconoclasm* (Birmingham, 1977), pp. 113–31.

[35] V. Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, p. 111; M. Vinson, 'Rhetoric and Writing Strategies in the Ninth Century', in E. Jeffreys, ed., *Rhetoric in Byzantium* (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 9–22. Averil Cameron notes a general absence of scholarship on disputation material, especially that found in hagiographies in: *Arguing it Out: Discussion in Twelfth-Century Byzantium* (Budapest, 2016), pp. 10–13.

[36] *VC,* 12. [37] Ševčenko, 'The Greek Source of the Inscription', pp. 1806–18.

Solomon chalice is a 'borrowing', coming into the *VC* 'from a context which originally had nothing to do with its hero', and used as 'proof of Constantine's superior intellectual powers'.[38] This context, at least for the legend of this chalice, given Ševčenko's description of the manuscript and its contents, was most probably a Constantinopolitan one.[39]

The second passage under consideration is the encounter with the iconoclast patriarch, John VII.[40] The author shamelessly moulds the story of the council of the Restoration of Orthodoxy in 843 into a short disputation between Cyril and John, which concludes with the latter being silenced and 'feeling ashamed'.[41] Cyril is inserted into the resolution of Byzantine iconoclasm even though there is no other historical evidence to suggest he had any part of it, as a way of solidifying his orthodoxy in the eyes of what must have been intended Byzantine readers or listeners.

Previous studies, however, have not gone much further than stating these motifs to be borrowings without exploring their consequences. This has largely been due to the fact that these episodes have often been studied as sources into the background of Cyril as a historical individual, rather than sources into the cultural and symbolic landscape available to authors of Middle-Byzantine hagiography. Thus, there are two sets of consequences related to considering the *VC* as Byzantine literature which I seek to highlight in this section, and which inform my approach. The first is about language: I argue, along with a number of scholars, that the text was originally written in Greek. The second is about argument: I argue that language notwithstanding, the text is aimed at and engages with Byzantine intellectual culture in more fundamental ways than previously acknowledged.

Language

The debate over the language of the text intertwines closely with questions about Cyril and his commitment to the Slavs. The recognition of Cyril as an Apostle to the Slavs has given weight to the expectation that his life must therefore have been written in Slavonic. So, it has been proposed and discarded that the text was originally written in Greek, or that parts of it were in Greek and others originally in Slavonic.[42]

But the case that Greek was the original language of the text has become stronger in recent years. It was persuasively proposed that the earliest church service text for Cyril, datable to shortly after his death, but formalised by the tenth

[38] Ibid., p. 1815. [39] Ibid. [40] *VC*, 5.1. [41] 'стар҆ць оумльча и посрами се', ibid., 5.23.

[42] A. Vaillant, *Textes Vieux-Slaves*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1968), p. 25; R. Picchio, 'Compilazione e trama narrativa nelle "Vite" di Costantino e Metodio', *Ricerche Slavistiche*, 8 (1960), pp. 61–95; Kliment, *Subrani*, vol. 3, p. 5 (introduction).

century, was originally written in Greek.[43] This in turn strengthens the likelihood that other early materials concerning Cyril, such as the *VC*, might also have been written originally in Greek.

It is clear that the *VC* is steeped in Byzantine cultural symbols and both alludes to and directly cites Greek-language texts. Greek permeates the text in less dramatic ways too. What is identified as a Greek turn of phrase is found in word-for-word translation, and Cyril is recorded praying in Greek with Slavonic letters, 'lord have mercy' ('кꙋрие леисо') rather than the Slavonic translation (namely, 'господи помилоуи').[44] Temchin has recently suggested that the use of the word philosopher in the text performs a play on words in Greek which cannot be realised in Slavonic, and a number of scholars have pointed out 'Grecisms' in variant readings of the *VC* which suggest the author was a first-language Greek speaker (some more persuasive than others).[45] A Greek prototype is also suggested by the letter of Anastasius the Librarian, a contemporary papal bureaucrat, in which he recounts Cyril's translation of the relics of St Clement, translating the story (as he notes) from a Greek text.[46]

Judging both from the Byzantine literary motifs the text appeals to, and from the Greek-language sources used in the text like the chalice inscription, it seems that the *VC* was most probably written by one or more Byzantine Greek speakers. Moreover, the findings of my textual analysis below strongly suggest that the text had a Greek-speaking audience in mind. In any case, as Anatolii Turilov notes, the fact that the service to Cyril was 'initially written in Greek, by no means excludes its early translation in Slavonic, but rather, suggests it'.[47] The same is true for the *VC*. I do not doubt that the text was translated into Slavonic within a few decades of being composed. Yet, the *VC* is clearly targeted at an audience which shares the author's Byzantine education. This much suggests that even if translated into Slavonic, it has preserved its particular, late ninth-century Byzantine intellectual concerns, especially with education and rhetoric.

[43] Translating the text back into Greek reveals the acrostic which is absent in the Slavonic. See: S. Temchin, 'O grecheskom proiskhozhdenii drevneishei sluzhby Kirillu Filosofu', in H. Rothe and D. Christians, eds., *Liturgische Hymnen nach byzantinischem Ritus bei den Slaven in ältester Zeit* (Paderborn, 2007), pp. 328–39. V. B. Krys'ko, *Staroslavianskii kanon Kirillu-Filosofu: Istochniki i rekonstruktsiia* (Moscow, 2014).

[44] 'то кто можеть на водѣ бесѣдѣ писати', 'who can write on water', *VC*, 14.11. The proverb is discussed in: Kliment, *Subrani*, vol. 3, p. 145. *VC*, 8.24.

[45] S. Temchin, 'O perevodnom kharaktere Prostrannogo zhitiia Kirilla Filosofa: Obygryvanie grecheskogo slova *ΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΟΣ* v opisanii sna o vybore nevesty', in I. M. Ladyzhenskii and M. A. Puzina, eds., *Sub specie aeternitatis: Sbornik nauchnykh statei k 60-letiiu Vadima Borisovicha Krys'ko* (Moscow, 2021), pp. 466–74. T. Daiber, 'Variant Reading and Reconstruction: Grecisms in the Life of Constantine-Cyril', in B. A. Baranov, ed., *Gumanitarnoe obrazovanie i nauka v tekhnicheskom vuze.: Sbornik dokladov Vserossiiskoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii s mezhdunarodnym uchastiem* (Izhevsk, 2017), pp. 377–82.

[46] For more on this see Chapter 3.

[47] 'Разумеется, тот факт, что служба Константину-Кириллу была первоначально написана по-гречески, отнюдь не исключает её раннего перевода на славянский, а скорее, напротив, предполагает его', A. Turilov, 'K izucheniiu velikomoravskogo literaturnogo naslediia': Promezhutochye itogi, spornye voprosy i perspektivy', *Vestnik slavianskikh kul'tur*, 1 (2015), pp. 130–52, at p. 133.

Argument

As noted above, I seek to argue that the *VC* does not simply cut and paste Constantinopolitan hagiographical motifs. Rather, Byzantine texts and ideas underpin the text in more fundamental ways. The basis for this contention is the propagation, within the text, of a clear Byzantine imperial agenda stressing both the territorial and cultural superiority of Byzantium over its neighbours. In Cyril's debate with Muslim scholars, he is asked why Christians do not pay taxes to the Arabs, given that Jesus paid his taxes.[48] His response is to insist that Jesus paid taxes to the Romans, and therefore the Arabs should not judge him—'we all give taxes to the Romans'.[49] Not long after, Cyril makes it clear that the Roman Empire is also an intellectual leader—'all the arts came from us', he notes to his Muslim audience.[50]

The author propagates Roman universalism freely, through the mouths of the foreign rulers. Rastislav's request for religious preachers in Slavonic was because, as the author has him say, 'it is from you [i.e. the Romans] that good law is given to all regions'.[51] It is made clear in the text therefore, that 'we' are the Romans, and all others, Slavs, Khazars, Saracens, and Venetians are on the outside—like the Moravians whose leader is informed by Emperor Michael that God 'made letters in *your* language appear, now in *our* times' (my emphasis).[52] When it comes to finding a foundational text for a predestined Apostle to the Slavs, the *VC* with its imperialism and caricaturing of others by no means strikes the reader as a good candidate.

More fundamentally still, the text formulates its own positions through Byzantine language and literature and locates itself within them. This is most evident in another section of the text for which Ševčenko has successfully identified a Greek-language source: that is the definition of philosophy given by Cyril. Upon completing his Constantinopolitan education Cyril is asked what philosophy is by the Logothete here unnamed, but normally a high-ranking fiscal administrator at court. He answers:

> божиимь и чловѣчьскыимь вещемь разѹмь елико можеть чловѣкь приближити се богѹ, яко же дѣтелию оучить чловѣка по wбразѹ и по подобию быти сътвор'шимоу и[53]
>
> [Philosophy is] understanding ('razoum') divine and human affairs, as much as man is able to approach God, since it teaches man by action to be in the image and likeness of the one, who created him

The first two clauses of this definition are almost exact citations from the definitions of philosophy found in the Neoplatonist commentators on the *Isagoge* of

[48] *VC*, 6.40. [49] 'римлянюмь въси даємь дань', ibid., 6.47.
[50] 'а wть нась соуть въса хоудожьствіа изьшла', ibid., 6.53.
[51] 'wть вась бо на в'се страны добрь законь исходить', ibid., 14.5.
[52] 'ныня въ наша лѣта явль бѹк'вы въ вашь єзыкъ', ibid.,14.16. [53] Ibid., 4.8.

Porphyry: Ammonius, David, and Elias.[54] All three authors offer both commentaries on the *Isagoge* and more general introductions to philosophy which formed the backbone of Middle Byzantine philosophical, and in particular, logical education.[55] All of these texts offer the same seven definitions of philosophy which they then categorise, comment on, and repeat, to cite Ševčenko, 'ad nauseam'.[56] To offer but one example of how closely two of these align with the *VC*, here is Cyril's definition alongside the text of Ammonius:

БОЖІИМЬ И ЧЛОВѢЧЬСКЫМЬ ВЕЩЕМЬ РАЗѢМЬ ЕЛИКО МОЖЕТЬ ЧЛОВѢКЪ ПРИБЛИЖИТИ СЕ БОГѢ, ЯКО ЖЕ ДѢТЕЛИЮ ОУЧИТЬ ЧЛОВѢКА ПО ѠБРАЗѢ И ПО ПОДОБИЮ БЫТИ СЪТВОР'ШИМОУ И *VC*, 4.8.	*τινὲς δὲ ὁρίζονται οὕτως· 'φιλοσοφία ἐστὶ θείων τε καὶ ἀνθρωπίνων πραγμάτων γνῶσις'* […] *ἔστι δὲ καὶ τοιοῦτος ὁρισμὸς ἀπὸ τοῦ τέλους ὁ λέγων 'φιλοσοφία ἐστὶ ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν ἀνθρώπῳ'.* Ammonius, 3.2–3, 3.8–9.
[Philosophy is] understanding ('razoum') divine and human things/ affairs, as much as man is able to approach God, since it teaches man by action to be in the image and likeness of he who created him	Some people define it thus: 'philosophy is knowledge ("gnōsis") of both divine and human affairs' […] And there is also such a definition concerned with the final goal which says: 'philosophy is likeness to God to the best of man's ability'

[54] I. Ševčenko, 'The Definition of Philosophy in the *Life of Saint Constantine*', repr. in his *Byzantium and the Slavs: In Letters and Culture* (Cambridge, MA, 1991), 93–106, at p. 100; A. Busse, *Ammonius in Porphyrii isagogen sive quinque voces* (Berlin, 1891) 3.2–3; 3.8–9 (cited below). David's definitions are found in his introduction, although one of the two definitions is also invoked in his commentary. Introduction: '*οὕτως οὖν καὶ τὴν φιλοσοφίαν ὁριζόμεθα ἀπὸ μὲν τοῦ ὑποκειμένου, ὡς ὅταν εἴπωμεν "φιλοσοφία ἐστὶ γνῶσις θείων τε καὶ ἀνθρωπίνων πραγμάτων", ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ τέλους 'φιλοσοφία ἐστὶν ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν ἀνθρώπῳ', ἀπὸ τοῦ συναμφοτέρου δέ, ὡς ὅταν εἴπωμεν 'φιλοσοφία ἐστὶ γνῶσις θείων τε καὶ ἀνθρωπίνων πραγμάτων ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν ἀνθρώπῳ*', A. Busse, *Davidis prolegomena et in Porphyrii isagogen commentarium* (Berlin, 1904), 18.7–11. Commentary: '*οὕτω καὶ ἡ φιλοσοφία ἄγγελός ἐστι τῶν θεῶν· αὕτη γὰρ ἀπαγγέλλει ἡμῖν τὰ θεῖα, εἴ γε γνῶσις θείων τε καὶ ἀνθρωπίνων πραγμάτων ἐστί*', Busse, *Davidis prolegomena et in Porphyrii*, 96.7–9. Elias lists all seven after explaining their types in his commentary to Porphyry, and the ones found in the *VC* come second and third: *πρῶτος ὁ λέγων 'γνῶσις τῶν ὄντων ᾗ ὄντα ἐστί', δεύτερος ὁ λέγων 'γνῶσις θείων τε καὶ ἀνθρωπίνων πραγμάτων', μετ' αὐτὸν ὁ λέγων 'μελέτη θανάτου', τέταρτος ὁ λέγων 'ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν ἀνθρώπῳ', πέμπτος ὁ ἐκ τῆς ὑπεροχῆς ὁ λέγων 'τέχνη τεχνῶνκαὶ ἐπιστήμη ἐπιστημῶν', ἕκτος ὁ ἐκ τῆς ἐτυμολογίας ὁ λέγων 'φιλία σοφίας'*, A. Busse, *Eliae in Porphyrii isagogen et Aristotelis categorias commentaria* (Berlin,1900), 8.8–13.

[55] Ševčenko, 'The Definition of Philosophy' p. 100; G. Kustas, 'Commentators on Aristotle's Categories and the Isagoge of Porphyry', in his *Studies in Byzantine Rhetoric* (Thessaloniki, 1973), pp. 101–18; Porphyry, *Introduction*, trans. J. Barnes (Oxford, 2003).

[56] Ševčenko, 'The Definition of Philosophy', p. 101. Both Ammonius and David divide the definitions into three kinds. They are either '*ἀπὸ τοῦ ὑποκειμένου*' or concerned with definitions and meaning, and '*ἀπὸ τοῦ τέλους*', or concerned with the end goal or purpose of philosophy, or they are concerned with both. For David see above. For Elias, Busse, *Eliae in Prophyry*, 7.25 onwards.

The textual community responsible for the *VC*, therefore had not only basic education in Greek grammar and rhetoric, but had proceeded to the upper echelons of Byzantine learning and into logic and philosophy.[57]

It is notable therefore that the last phrase of the definition, 'since it teaches man in action to be in the image and likeness of the one, who created him', which is probably an allusion to Genesis, does not have an exact parallel in the philosophical materials. Due to this, Ševčenko concludes that 'it is not necessary to consider this quotation [of Genesis] as a third part of Constantine's definition' but rather an elaboration, and moreover that this attests to two Byzantine definitions of philosophy in the Middle Byzantine period and loosely labelled the 'Christian philosopher-scholar' and the 'philosopher of the monkish ascetic kind' of which Cyril is the former.[58] Yet, the binary posited here seems unduly stark. This chapter and the next will posit instead, that part of the purpose of the *VC* as a text is to dissolve the tension between Christian philosopher and monkish ascetic.

To summarise, the *VC* is not simply Byzantine literature because it alludes to Byzantine matters and motifs, but because it communicates its agenda through the language and framework of a Byzantine education, and because this agenda is about the purpose of (Byzantine) education in the Christian realm. In turn, I offer a close study of the realisation of the definition through the representation of Cyril's education, and the deeds or disputations that follow it.

Cyril's Education: Learning Perfecting Grace

It has long been acknowledged that the *VC* is made up of disputations. As noted above, Vavřínek has demonstrated that over half of the text cites direct speech in Cyril's disputations. But the dominance of debates is even more significant than its direct quotations alone. When broken down, after Cyril's childhood education, thirteen of the remaining seventeen pages of the *VC* either directly quote a debate, summarise in brief an episode in which Cyril persuaded someone, or set up the context for a disputation. It is hard to argue that this is not, fundamentally, a text about argument.

The most thorough study of the disputations was made by Vavřínek. In it, he identifies four of these disputations and interprets them as a range of ways of depicting Cyril's sanctity leading up to the invention of Slavonic, and thus ultimately defends the idea that the text was 'primarily to be the theoretical basis of

[57] Unlike, for instance, military literate elites like the eleventh-century general Kekaumenos. See: C. Roueché, 'The Rhetoric of Kekaumenos', in E. Jeffreys, ed., *Rhetoric in Byzantium* (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 23–37, at pp. 28, 33–7.

[58] Ševčenko, 'The Definition of Philosophy', pp. 96, 106.

the Slavonic Church in Moravia'.[59] Whilst Vavřínek also mentions Cyril's education, mostly to refer to it as a hagiographic trope, he does not pay particular attention to the cumulative nature of the learning episodes in the *VC*.[60] I argue that learning and disputing are deeply intertwined. More concretely, the text is made up of three phases of learning, which set up three major disputations in the *Life*: Hellenic learning, evoked in the dispute with Arabs, Old Testament languages, evoked in the dispute with Jews, and what I propose to be the act of learning the Slavonic letters from God, evoked and defended in the dispute with priests in Venice. The first disputation in the text, with the iconoclast patriarch John VII is here omitted, not because it is not important but rather because it stands aside from this wider framework which forms the backbone of the text, and serves a much more specific purpose.[61] It lays out Cyril's commitment to icon veneration, suggesting it was still important to refute iconoclasm in the latter parts of the ninth century. This supports the recent position of Federico Montinaro, that iconoclasm was still a live issue in the period. The Second Council of Nicaea in 787, which restored the worship of images, was not recognised as ecumenical in the ninth century, so the argument for icons had to keep being made.[62] By contrast, the three disputations under consideration take up significantly more room in the text, and each represents symbolically different moments in the history of Christianity.[63] Naturally, however, to understand the role of the arguments performed by Cyril in the text, it is crucial to begin with an understanding of the author's portrayal of Cyril's learning.

Hellenism

The *VC* presents Cyril as a devoted learner but his education is always in service to his faith. He begins by mastering grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy, but he only turns to them under the guidance of a church father, Gregory of Nazianzus (ca. 329–90).

In the first mention of Cyril's education, we find the saint 'sitting at home and learning the books of the holy Gregory the theologian by heart'.[64] He then writes a panegyric to Gregory of Nazianzus in which he asks him to become his 'teacher

[59] 'měl být především teoretickým základem slovanksé círcke na Moravě', Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, p. 82.

[60] Ibid., p. 57.

[61] *VC*, 5.

[62] F. Montinaro, 'Introduction', in *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 869–70*, pp. 52–6.

[63] Iconoclasm takes up only a page, the Arab debate takes up two, the Khazar six, and the Latin another two. In the A4 edition of Kliment, *Subrani*, vol. 3, pp. 93, 93–5, 95–103, 106–7 respectively.

[64] 'сѣдѣаеше въ домꙋ смоюемь, оучѣ се изь оустьь книгами светаго Григорıа Богослова', *VC*, 3.17. The 'Theologian' became the standard epithet of Gregory of Nazianzus by the mid-fifth century, see: R. Lim, *Public Disputation, Power, and Social Order in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA, 1995), p. 159.

and enlightener' ('оучитель и просвѣтитель').[65] Yet he soon struggles with Gregory's works:

> […] въшьдь же въ многыи бесѣды и оумь вели, не могъы разоумѣти глъбинь в оуныиие велико въпаде[66]
>
> […] Delving into many orations and into their greatness in meaning, not being able to understand ('razoumieti') their depth, he was deeply disheartened

The text makes clear that what Cyril needs to understand Gregory better is education. The saint finds an old grammarian in Thessaloniki and begs him: 'Teach me the art of grammar well!'[67] The man refuses, but God soon grants it that Cyril is called to Constantinople, where he pursues a full education in the so-called 'earthly wisdoms'. He first turns to grammar, and then to Homer and geometry under Leo, and all 'philosophical teachings' ('философиискымь оученіемь') from Photios, including rhetoric and arithmetic, astronomy, music and 'all other Hellenic arts'.[68]

The use of the phrase 'Hellenic arts' in a non-derogatory manner is striking in Byzantine literature from this period, but the portrayal of classical education or 'earthly wisdom' as a necessary prerequisite to the comprehension of Christian writing is far from unusual.[69] Plenty of late antique texts sought to reconcile Greek-language education with the new faith. Perhaps the most influential was that of another church father, Basil of Caesarea (330–79) who studied with Gregory of Nazianzus, and whose close friendship with him is very well documented. In his treatise entitled 'Address to Young Men and how they Might Derive Benefit from Greek Literature', Basil also portrays Christian writings as complex problems, which require a depth of understanding lacking in youth:

> *εἰς δὴ τοῦτον ἄγουσι μὲν ἱεροὶ λόγοι, δι' ἀπορρήτων ἡμᾶς ἐκπαιδεύοντες.ἕως γε μὴν ὑπὸ τῆς ἡλικίας ἐπακούειν τοῦ βάθους τῆς διανοίας αὐτῶν οὐχ οἷόν τε, ἐν ἑτέροις οὐ πάντη διεστηκόσιν, ὥσπερ ἐν σκιαῖς τισι καὶ κατόπτροις, τῷ τῆς ψυχῆς ὄμματι τέως προγυμναζόμεθα*[70]

[65] *VC*, 3.20.

[66] Ibid., 3.21. In some MS variations we see 'и в оумь вели', which better explains the meaning. Kliment, *Subrani*, vol. 3, p. 111.

[67] 'добрѣ наоучи ме хѣдожьствѣ граматичьскомѣ', *VC*, 3.23.

[68] 'и всѣмь прочиимь елин'скымь хоудожьствомь', ibid., 4.2.

[69] A text search of the TLG database for '*τέχνη*' and '*ἑλληνική*' within fifteen words, which would be the most likely Greek translation of the phrase, finds only three attestations, all in Christian texts, and only two predate the *VC*: John Chrysostom's sermon on the holy Pascha, and Didymus Caecus' fragments of a commentary on the psalms. *TLG*, http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu (last accessed: September 2023).

[70] Basil of Caesarea, *Letters*, vol. 4: *Letters 249–368. On Greek Literature*, eds., trans. R. J. Deferrari and M. R. P. McGuire (Cambridge, MA, 1934), II.6–10.

> Now to this [other life] the Holy Scriptures lead the way, teaching us through mysteries. Yet so long as, by reason of your age, it is impossible for you to understand the depth of the meaning of these, in the meantime, by means of other analogies which are not entirely different, we give, as it were in shadows and reflections, a preliminary training to the eye of the soul[71]

For Basil, as for the *VC*, the young mind is 'unable to understand the depth' ('не могъı разоумѣти глъбинъь', 'ἐπακούειν τοῦ βάθους [...] οὐχ οἷόν τε') of Christian teaching, and therefore requires training in the Hellenic arts.[72] Thus in both texts, education in 'earthly wisdom', or in grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy, was done simply to enhance understanding ('razoum') of divine affairs. Basil's treatise remained significant in the Middle Byzantine period. It was cited and excerpted by John Damascene, as well as in the collection of maxims from St Basil ascribed to Symeon Metaphrastes, and therefore the tenth century.[73] Such diffuse and widespread dissemination, rather than some direct textual connection, most probably explains the allusion in the *VC*.

The reference to Gregory of Nazianzus, by contrast, was clearly carefully thought through. Gregory, arguably the 'most important figure in the synthesis of Greek rhetoric and Christianity', was an excellent model for piety and education. He began his own career studying rhetoric and philosophy at Alexandria and Athens, but eventually devoted himself to the church, and more particularly to using oration and rhetoric to defeat the heresy of Arianism. By 380, thanks to these efforts he was made Bishop of Constantinople.[74] Moreover, interest in him was resurgent in ninth-century Byzantium, making him a pertinent example to a contemporary Byzantine audience.[75]

That excuses are made for Cyril's education in the Hellenic arts is important, and Gregory of Nazianzus is not the only one. This early section of the *VC* concludes with a temptation ('prosklēsis'). The Logothete, offers Cyril plenty of gold and an illustrious wife.[76] But our saint refuses, opting instead to be both tonsured and made librarian of the patriarchate: learning in service to faith.[77]

[71] Ibid., trans. Deferrari and McGuire.

[72] The Slavonic term for 'depth' here, 'глъбини', is commonly used to translate precisely the Greek '*βάθος*'. *LPGL*, p. 130.

[73] Basil of Caesarea, *Letters*, p. 371.

[74] G. A. Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (Princeton, NJ, 1994), pp. 261–3.

[75] See: L. Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth-Century Byzantium: Image as Exegesis in the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus* (Cambridge, 1999).

[76] Logothetes were usually high officials, at the head of departments, with primarily but not exclusively fiscal functions. *VC*, 4.11–20. How typical this motif is, also features in: Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, pp. 58–9.

[77] *VC*, 4.15–20.

The Old Testament

Cyril's classical education is followed by a dispute with Muslims at the Caliph's court, which will be discussed below. But this learning did not suffice for his trip to the Khazars. Rather this necessitated a second wave of education in the *VC*. In this next phase, Cyril acquires three new languages or books: Hebrew, Samaritan, and an unknown language surviving as 'ros'sky'. The description of the acquisition of each language once again crafts a careful balance between piety and 'outside education', or the study of rhetoric, grammar, and philosophy.

After Cyril sets out to Kherson, the text notes, 'he taught himself spoken and written Hebrew, translated the grammar in eight parts and from this, he received understanding ("razoum")'.[78] The terminology used clearly invokes an earlier passage in the text, when Cyril learned the orations of Gregory by heart, but feared he did not understand ('razoumieti') their depth, and so turned to grammatical instruction. In the case of Hebrew, too, understanding is only acquired after grammatical education. The written Hebrew referred to is most probably alluding to the Old Testament texts.

It is unclear whether the *VC* is suggesting that Cyril translated Hebrew grammar into Greek or vice versa. But it seems the act of translation is here symbolic rather than literal. The 'eight parts of grammar' probably refers to the eight parts of speech which 'became standard in Alexandrian and Byzantine grammar books' and emerge from Dionysius Thrax's second- to first-century BC textbook, the *Art of Grammar*, or *Technē Grammatikē*:[79]

> *Λόγος δέ ἐστι πεζῆς λέξεως σύνθεσις διάνοιαν αὐτοτελῆ δηλοῦσα. Τοῦ δὲ λόγου μέρη ἐστὶν ὀκτώ· ὄνομα, ῥῆμα, μετοχή, ἄρθρον, ἀντωνυμία, πρόθεσις, ἐπίρρημα, σύνδεσμος.*[80]
>
> Speech is a combination of words in prose or verse expressing a complete thought. There are eight parts of speech: noun, verb, participle, article, pronoun, preposition, adverb and conjunction.[81]

The *VC* may be implying not so much that Cyril 'translated' Hebrew grammar into Greek, but rather that he 'transferred' the conceptual structures of Greek grammatical study, namely its division into eight parts, to the study of another

[78] 'наоучи се тоу жидовскои бесѣдѣ и книгамь, осем чести прѣложи граматикию и wть того разѣмь въсприемь', *VC*, 8.10.

[79] R. Robins, *The Byzantine Grammarians: Their Place in History* (Berlin, 1993), pp. 58–9. This text will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 3.

[80] Dionysios Thrax, *The Art of Grammar*, in *Grammatici Graeci*, ed. G. Uhlig, vol. 1.1 (Leipzig, 1883; repr. Hildesheim, 1965), 23.

[81] Amended from: Robins, *The Byzantine Grammarians*, p. 57.

language.[82] This grammatical education assisted understanding ('razoum') of Gregory of Nazianzus in Greek, and now its transferral into Hebrew helps Cyril gain understanding of the written and spoken Hebrew. The lesson therefore seems to be less about the language of the words, and more about the transferability and usefulness of grammatical constructs outside of the Greek language from which they emerge: a sort of grammatical fundamentalism.

The process of learning through grammar alone is then balanced with a pious alternative:

> Самърѣнинъ же нѣкои тоу живѣаше и приходе къ иемоу стезаше се съ нимь и принесе книгы самарѣи'скыѥ и показа ѥ емоу. Испрошь ѥ оу нѥго философь, затвори се въ храминѣ и на молитвѫ се наложи и wть бога разѹмь приѥмь, ч'тати начѣть книгы бес порока[83]
>
> And a Samaritan who was living there, went to him [Cyril]—he [the Samaritan] was arguing with him—and he brought Samaritan books and showed them to him. The philosopher asked for them from him [the Samaritan], shut himself in a house and committed himself to prayer, and he received understanding ('razoum') from God, he began to read the books without error

Whilst grammar sufficed to understand the works of Gregory of Nazianzus and Hebrew, here Cyril learns to read Samaritan books entirely through prayer. Yet the result is the same: he achieves understanding ('razoum').

The final act of learning, of a language the name of which unclear, synthesises these two approaches:

> […] и обрѣт' же тоу ѥѵаггеліе и ѱалтир, росьскы[84] писмень писано, и чловѣка обрѣть, глаголюща тою бесѣдою и бесѣдовавь съ нимь и силоу рѣчи приѥмь, своѥи бесѣдѣ прикладаѥ, различие писмень, гласнаа и съгласнаа, и къ богѫ молитвѫ дръже и вѣскорѣ начѣть чисти и сказати.[85]
>
> […] and he found a Gospel and a psalter, written in 'ros'sky' letters, and he found a man, who spoke with this speech ('beseda') and he spoke with him, and having

[82] Although translators of the *VC* have opted for 'translated', the verb Slavonic verb ('прѣложи') itself has a broader meaning. It can render the Greek 'to change' or 'to substitute' ('μεταβάλλω') and 'to transfer' or 'to place differently' ('μετατίθημι'). See: *LLP*, pp. 451–2; *LPGL*, p. 734; H. Lunt, 'On interpreting the Russian Primary Chronicle: The year 1037', *Slavic and East European Journal*, 32 (1988), pp. 251–64.

[83] *VC*, 8.10.

[84] There are variants of this word proposed by different editions. The Bulgarian Academy proposes: 'роуш'кым', Kliment, *Subrani*, vol. 3, p. 96. Christiano Diddi's edition of the South Slavonic testimony groups of the text proposes: 'рwс'скы'. C. Diddi, 'Materiali e Richerche per l'Edizione Critica di Vita Constantini: III. Edizione del Gruppo dei Testimoni Serbi', *Ricerche Slavistiche*, 48 (2004), pp. 129–89, at p. 150.

[85] *VC*, 8.15.

> received the force of the words ('rech') comparing the different letters ('pismen'), vowels and consonants, with his own speech, and having addressed a prayer to God, he soon began to read and interpret.[86]

This description of learning can be divided into two stages. In the first, Cyril receives the 'force of words' (i.e. their meaning) by comparing his own letters, namely the vowels and consonants, with those of the speaker of 'ros'sky'.[87] In light of the allusion to the eight parts of grammar in the section about Hebrew, the reference to vowels and consonants is also best understood as part of a grammatical approach to learning.[88] Cyril receives the 'meaning' or significance of the words through a study of their grammatical components. The latter statement, and second part of the process of achieving meaning in language is entirely due to divine intervention. Through simple prayer, Cyril begins to 'read and interpret'.

Thus, in the third consecutive passage describing Cyril's learning of languages, we find a harmony between the previous two. He learned Hebrew using the art of grammar alone. He learned to read Samaritan books using only prayer. But he learned the 'ros'sky' under question here through both the use of grammatical concepts from Greek grammatical textbooks *and* through prayer.

What language 'ros'sky' is meant to be has remained a matter of contention.[89] The most common theory is that a consonantal flip has occurred in the process of transmission and the original language was meant to be Syriac, although some insist the language is in fact some form of Slavonic written by the early Rus.[90] In the framework of my argument, Syriac makes good sense, as a language associated with the early history of Christianity. In medieval sources, Syriac referred loosely to all Aramaic, and it is sometimes considered to have been the language Jesus spoke.[91] This at least puts it in a similar category to Hebrew and Samaritan books. It is possible however, that the fifteenth-century manuscripts are too corrupt for the reconstitution of the original text to be feasible, or even that the similarity with the word Rus is an intentional late medieval correction by East Slavic scribes.

[86] I am grateful to Professor Catherine Mary MacRobert for her assistance with this passage.

[87] The 'force of words' is clearly meant in the New Testament way: 'If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and the speaker is a foreigner to me'. ('ἐὰν οὖν μὴ εἰδῶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς φωνῆς, ἔσομαι τῷ λαλοῦντι βάρβαρος καὶ ὁ λαλῶν ἐν ἐμοὶ βάρβαρος'.) 1 Corinthians 14:11.

[88] Only the short subsection on syllables separates the explanation of vowels and consonants from that of the eight parts of speech in: Dionysios Thrax, *The Art of Grammar*, 6–11.

[89] For a recent summary of the debates alongside a strange suggestion that 'ros'sky' meant Rumi, and thus Syrian Christians, see: T. Daiber, 'Eshe raz o "ruskikh bukvakh" v Zhitii Konstantina-Kirilla', in I. M. Ladyzhenskii and M. A. Puzina, eds., *Sub specie aeternitatis: Sbornik nauchnykh statei k 60-letiiu Vadima Borisovicha Krys'ko* (Moscow, 2021), pp. 311–20.

[90] Ibid., p. 314.

[91] I am grateful to Dr Jack Tannous for letting me see his working paper entitled, 'What Is Syriac? Explorations in the History of a Name', in K. Akalin and Z. Duyu, eds., *Syriac Identity: Receptions and Interpretations/Süryani Kimliği: Kabul ve Yorumlama* (forthcoming).

Regardless of this ambiguity, Cyril as a learner is not simply represented as a harmoniser of worldly wisdom and pious learning. His classical education is built upon by his education in the Old Testament languages and assists it. This process of acquiring 'outside knowledge', guided by divine intervention, is also performed to a particular end, a pious telos: the refutation of heathens.

The New Testament

The extremely brief account of the creation of the Slavonic alphabet, ought to be considered within this broader narrative trajectory of Cyril's acts of learning, and the ways in which those acts prepared him for different audiences and different stages in his disputations. The two sets of learning described so far, of grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy, and of Hebrew, Samaritan, and 'ros'sky' have been mostly passive in nature. They have described processes through which Cyril acquired or received understanding, before enacting his knowledge 'in deeds' through disputation. Cyril learns orations by Gregory and then is taught 'all Hellenic arts' ('вс҃ѣмь […] елин'скымь хоудожьствомь') to acquire better understanding of Gregory.[92] He learns the Hebrew 'orations and books', and then learns to 'read' the books of the Samaritans. With the assistance of grammar and prayer, he begins to 'read and interpret' in the 'ros'sky' language. However, besides an invocation to Gregory of Nazianzus to become his teacher at the very start of the text, there is no mention of Cyril writing, actively, or creating anything anew throughout this process.

It is rather unsurprising therefore, upon a closer look at the passages regarding the Slavonic alphabet, that Cyril himself is not credited with its creation. The Slavonic letters are only made to appear to Cyril by God, in what is undoubtedly best considered a third act of learning, presented here in the form of pure divine revelation. This is the full explanation of the creation of the Slavonic alphabet in the *Life*, and it follows Cyril's customary withdrawal to prayer:

> […] въскорѣ же ѥ емоу богъ яви, послоушаѥ молитвь своихь рабь, и абиѥ сложи писмена и начѧть бесѣдѫ писати еѵаггелскѫ: испрьва бѣ слово и слово бѣ оу бога и богъ бѣ слово и прочеѥ[93]
>
> […] and soon, God made them [the letters] appear to him, having listened to the prayer of his servant, and he immediately put together the letters and began to write the words of the evangelist: in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God and so forth

[92] *VC*, 4.14. [93] Ibid., 14.13.

Rather than an act of creation, God reveals the letters for Cyril to learn and put together. This clearly alludes to the same divine agency of prayers exposed in the case of the Samaritan books and 'ros'sky' letters. In all three cases, prayer alone can bring access to knowledge or understanding. Here, in this final act of learning, it grants access to the Gospel itself.

The same divine agency alone is credited in the only other time in the *VC* when the invention of the letters is described. The emperor Michael supposedly sends a letter to Rastislav, ruler of the Moravians, to announce the success, by stating that 'God […] having seen your faith […] made letters in your language appear now in our times'.[94] Cyril is described subsequently only as the man sent by Michael, 'to whom God made them [the letters] known' ('ѥмоуже ѥ богъ яви').[95] On a number of occasions, therefore, the author of the *VC* explicitly avoids granting Cyril creative agency.

It becomes clear that in the narrative of the *VC*, Cyril is not sent to Moravia because he invents the Slavonic alphabet. He invents it after the emperor decides to send him to Central Europe. Nor is he sent explicitly due to his knowledge of Slavonic. Scholars have often assumed this from the emperor Michael's assertion to Cyril prior to the mission to Moravia that 'no one else can carry this out like you'.[96] But Slavonic is not mentioned here; the ability to speak Slavonic is only given as a reason for Cyril's appointment to the mission in the *VM* and the reasons for this sudden stress on Slavonic in the *VM* will be discussed in greater depth in the next section of this book.[97] Michael addresses Cyril with nearly the same words prior to his mission to the Khazars, even though at this point in the narrative, he does not know Hebrew: 'no one else can carry this out adequately'.[98]

Cyril is sent, rather, because he is best educated in the method of debate as both a grammarian and a rhetorician and in the content of faith, as 'monkish ascetic', to use words to refute the opponents of the orthodox faith. As such the mission to Moravia, does not stand apart from Cyril's encounter with Jews, Samaritans, and speakers of 'ros'sky'. Nor does his preaching in Slavonic seem particularly unusual to the author, who insists:

> […] мы же роды знаѥмь книгы оумѣюще и богоу славꙋ въздающе своим ѥзыкомь къждо. Явѣ же соут сіи: армени, пер'си, аваз'гы, ивери, соуг'ди годи, ѡбри, тꙋрси, козари, ааравляне, єгуп'ти и иніи мнѡзы[99]
>
> […] for we know peoples who have knowledge of books and praise God each in their own language. It is known that these are: Armenians, Persians, Abkhazians, Georgians, Sogdian Goths and Avars, Turks, Khazars, Arabs, Egyptians and many others.

[94] 'богъ […] видѣвь вѣрꙋ твою […] ныня въ наша лѣта явль бꙋк'вы въ вашь ѥзыкь', ibid., 14.16.
[95] Ibid., 14.16.
[96] 'не можеть инь никтоже исправити якоже ты', ibid., 14.8.
[97] *VM*, 5.8; see: Chapter 4.
[98] 'инь во никтоже не можеть достоино сего творити', *VC*, 8.7.
[99] *VC*, 16.7.

Cyril's final stage of education demonstrates a difference of degree rather than kind. This difference is the total omission of the role of rhetorical or grammatical education in the account of his acquisition of Slavonic letters. This difference can only be explained when the tripartite disputational cycle for which Cyril's education prepares him is explored as one cumulative whole.

Cyril's Disputations: Words and Deeds

There is no doubt that, as represented in the *VC*, Cyril is persuasive. In addition to Vavřínek's monograph, Cyril's individual speeches have received plenty of scholarly attention, including a full monograph on his dispute with the Khazars.[100] Nonetheless, scholars have sought to analyse speeches attributed to Cyril, as actual speeches he gave or as direct citations from his (no longer extant) works.[101] In short, here as elsewhere, the preoccupation has been with Cyril as a historical individual and with the words he may have said. This chapter seeks to offer a comprehensive study of the rhetoric of the disputations as a connected, cumulative whole which formulates a particular argument. Contrary to Vavřínek, and for reasons outlined in the introduction of this chapter, I posit that this argument is not reducible to an apology for Slavonic but concerned more broadly with education and orthodoxy in Byzantium.

Through these major disputations, the *VC* is divided into three temporal phases which require three different types of education, and three different methods of argumentation. The text maintains that the third phase, of the indisputable New Testament, is the final and most perfect, but it also insists that the former two, of classical and Old Testament education, and of disputation with other Abrahamic religions' representatives, are crucial to its achievement. This section

[100] Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, pp. 53–84. On his dispute with the Muslims: V. Vavřínek, 'A Byzantine Polemic against Islam in Old Slavonic Hagiography', in V. Christides and Th. Papadopoulos, eds., *Graeco-Arabica VII–VIII: Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress of Graeco-Oriental and African Studies* (Nicosia, 2000), pp. 535–42; with the Venetians: Y. Velikov, '"Venetsianskiiat disput" na Sveti Kiril Filosof v svetlinata na antichnata ritorika', in *Starobulgarska rukopisna kniga: sudba i missiia: V pamet na prof. Kuio Kuev—100 godini ot rozhdenieto mu* (Sofia, 2012), pp. 113–26; S. Sivriev, 'Oratorskoto umenie na venetsianskata rech na Konstantin-Kiril', *Palaeobulgarica*, 17 (1993), pp. 48–51; with the Iconoclast patriarch: P. Balcárek, 'Some Remarks to the Response to Iconoclasm in the Old Slavonic *Vita Constantini*', *Studia patristica*, 48 (2010), pp. 355–9; and on the Khazars: T. Moriasu, 'Khazarskaia missiia Konstantina (ee znachenie v ZHK)', *Starobulgarska literatura*, 10 (1981), pp. 39–51; H. Trendafilov, *Khazarskata polemika na Konstantin-Kiril* (Sofia, 1999).

[101] For the Khazars, Trendafilov in particular tries to reconcile the text of the dispute with a mention in chapter 10 of the *VC*, that Methodios translated the works of his brother into eight parts. Trendafilov spends much of his book dividing this dispute into eight parts to show that it was excerpted from Cyril's own work. See: *Khazarskata polemika*, pp. 34–76. For a similar study arguing for the authenticity of a prayer by Cyril in the text see: A. Tachiaos, 'Neskol'ko zamechanii otnositel'no konchiny Konstantina-Kirilla v Rime', *Vspomogatel'nye istoricheskie distsipliny*, 30 (2007), pp. 160–8.

addresses the disputes in the order in which they occur in the text, before turning to the consequences this structure has for missionary activity. To assist the reader, I provide some tables which summarise the contents of each major disputation (Tables 1–3).

Table. 1 Disputation at the Caliph's Court

Lines of Dispute	Topic of Dispute
6.1–4	Saracens challenge Holy Trinity, ask for a man to dispute with
6.4–9	The emperor sends Cyril
6.10–13	Cyril sees demons on the doors of Christians, they challenge him to understand them
6.14–25	Accused that Christians do not follow Christ's laws, whilst Muslims do
6.26–32	Challenge of the Holy Trinity
6.33–9	Accused that Christians do not follow Christ's precept to turn the other cheek
6.40–7	Accused that Jesus paid his taxes, but Christians do not pay to the Arabs
6.48–53	Asked how he knows so much
6.54	He explains how the Caliph's garden grows by itself
6.54–55	Cyril is unimpressed by the wealth and palaces of the Caliph
6.57	They try to poison him

Table 2 Disputation en route to and at the Khazar Court with Jews and those who know Islam

Lines of Dispute	Topic of Dispute
8.1–10	Khazar invitation, the emperor dispatches Cyril
8.10–25	Journey: learns Hebrew, Samaritan, Ros'sky, discovers the relics of Clement
9.1–3	Upon arrival, Khazars send a 'cunning' man to dispute with him
9.3–4	Asked why the Romans appoint leaders from different families
9.5–9	Asked why Christians use the bible, rather than have their beliefs memorised
9.10–14	Arrives at the Khagan's court
9.15–22	Challenge of the Holy Trinity by Khagan
9.23–35	Challenge of Mary's ability to give birth to God
10.1–2	Cyril invites more debate at second sitting
10.2–35	Which is the oldest law—Noah or Moses?
10.36–63	Has the holy kingdom of Christians come yet?

Continued

Table 2 *Continued*

Lines of Dispute	Topic of Dispute
10.64–7	Jews are blessed descendants of Shem, but the Christians of Japheth (Gen. 9.26–7)
10.68–74	Are Christians blessed for putting their faith in a man, Jesus?
10.75–81	Why do Christians turn away from circumcision when Jesus did not denounce it?
10.82–8	Why do Christians worship idols?
10.89–94	Why do Christians eat pork and rabbit?
10.95–6	This is abbreviated from Cyril's discussions, translated by Methodios in eight parts
11.1–20	Third sitting: Khazars ask why Christianity is the holiest religion
10.21–9	An adviser who knows Islam asks: Why do Christians not respect Muhammad?
10.30–46	Adviser tells Jews and Muslims Cyril has refuted them, many promise to convert

Table 3 Debate with the Venetian bishops, priests, and monks

Lines of Dispute	Topic of Dispute
16.1–58	Why do you preach in Slavonic when there are only three holy languages?
16.59	Ashamed, the Latins went on their way

The Caliph's Court

As Vavřínek has noted, the anti-Islamic polemic in the treatise is not particularly extraordinary, nor does it demonstrate deep knowledge of Muslim doctrine.[102] Rather than addressing Cyril's Muslim interlocutors on their own terms, the author integrates them into the world of Roman education, stressing that he debated with 'wise men, learned in the books of geometry and astronomy and other such teachings'.[103] Framing the Muslim scholars thus is a clear allusion to a Hellenic education, of the sort Cyril himself receives earlier in the text.

The categorisation of Muslim scholars and their particular interest in astronomy aligns with the current historiographical consensus that the revival of various Byzantine philosophical pursuits in the last quarter of the eighth century, especially with respect to astronomy and astrology, was influenced by the

[102] Vavřínek, 'A Byzantine Polemic against Islam', p. 538.
[103] 'моудраа чедьь, книгъ наученa геѡметріи и астрономіи и прочимь оученіемь', *VC*, 6.14.

flourishing of intellectual output at the Abbasid court.[104] Cyril sits comfortably amid a number of narratives about Byzantine intellectuals engaging with Hellenic learning, and moving between the imperial and caliphal courts.[105]

A significant part of Cyril's encounter with the Muslims is spent not addressing doctrine in any great detail but demonstrating his rhetorical abilities and his education. This demonstration reveals that the core of Cyril's case for Byzantine superiority is intellectual, on the one hand, and state-territorial on the other. The natural conclusion to this superiority is that the Christian religion is itself superior, for its longevity has made it more sophisticated and intellectually challenging.

The first argument concerning intellectual superiority is asserted most clearly when the Muslim scholars ask Cyril how he has answers to all their questions. He notes:

> ѹловѣкь нѣкои поѹрьпь въ мори водоѹ, въ мѣши'ци ношаше ю и грьдѣше се, глаголе къ стран'никѡмь: видите ли водꙋ , юже никтоже не имать развѣ мене? Пришьдь же єдинь моужь помор'никь рече къ нємоу: не стыдиши ли се, сіа глаголе, хвале се тъкмо смрьдѣшїимь, а мы сего пꙋинꙋ имамы тако и ви дѣте а wть насъ соуть въса хоудожьствїа изышла[106]
>
> A certain man having drawn some water from the sea, was carrying it in a skin, and was boasting, saying to strangers: 'Do you see the water, which no one has but me?' But a man came who was a sailor, and he said to him: 'Are you not ashamed to speak like this, bragging with only this stinking skin? While we have the whole sea. And you do the same, when all arts came from us'

It is clear, that the arts that 'came from us' are the same arts which the *VC* notes the Muslim scholars are trained in, namely astronomy and other Hellenic arts. Thus, the text makes an explicit association between the Middle Byzantine polity and its people, and the intellectual tradition of Hellenic education. This association is used to argue against the Caliphate. Muslim scholars can only receive from outside, something that is internal to the history of Byzantine culture, and thus they cannot match Cyril in learning. That the *VC* protests so much about the sea of Hellenic education available in middle Byzantium, clearly reveals the intensity of Byzantine intellectual insecurity with respect to the Caliphate.

[104] P. Magdalino, 'Astrology', in A. Kaldellis and N. Siniossoglou, eds., *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 198–214, at p. 203.

[105] P. Magdalino, 'The Road to Baghdad in the Thought World of Ninth Century Byzantium', in L. Brubaker, ed., *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?* (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 195–213. The work of Dmitry Gutas has revealed this cultural transmission process at length, see: *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad in Early 'Abbasid Society (2nd–4th/5th–10th c.)* (London, 1998).

[106] *VC*, 6.51–3.

The second strand of Byzantine superiority is the claim to state-territorial historical continuity. As noted earlier, when accused that Christians do not follow Christ's precepts, because Jesus paid his taxes and they do not, Cyril argues that they do, because 'we all pay taxes to the Romans'.[107] This statement wrongly implies that Christians under Arab rule pay taxes to the Byzantine state. It also associates the medieval Byzantine polity directly with the Roman state which controlled the land Jesus lived upon. Once again, the argument against the Muslim scholars and their polity is to do with its youth. The Caliphate inherited land that is 'Roman', and arts that are 'Hellenic', both of which the *VC* presents as internal to, or integral aspects of, the identity of the contemporary Byzantine polity.

These two historic continuities, according to the *VC*, result in the intellectual superiority of Christianity as a religion. When Cyril is accused that Christians only follow Christ's law when it suits them, whilst Muslims follow Mohammed more loyally, his reply insists that 'our God is like the depths of the sea' and many will dive into these depths to find him.[108]

> […] и силныи умомь помощию его богатьство разѣмное приемлюще прѣплавають и възвращають се, а слабїи яко и в сьгнилѣхь кораблихь покоушають се прѣнити, ови истапляють, а ови съ трѣдомь едва отъдыхають, немощною лѣностию владюще се[109]
>
> […] and those strong in mind, receiving with his [God's] help a treasure of understanding ('razumnoe bogatstvo') sail across and return, but the weak, as if in rotten ships attempt to cross, and some sink, while only just survive with difficulty, tossed about by feeble sloth

This is an allusion to the kind of interventions God makes elsewhere in the *VC*, assisting Cyril with understanding ('razoum'). Echoing the earlier passage about Gregory of Nazianzus and the treatise of Basil of Caesarea, here too God's interventions only come to those strong in mind. And furthermore the mysteries of divine writings require intellectual training and education. The idea of 'depth' of understanding, both in Cyril failing to understand Gregory of Nazianzus' homilies prior to his education ('гльбини'), and in Basil of Caesarea's advice to young men ('*βάθος*'), is realised in this metaphor of God as the 'depths' of the sea. Christianity is for those strong in mind, and as made clear through the education of the saint, this strength comes through Hellenic education in youth for the individual and pious maturity in older age. But a youthfulness of mind can also be applied to whole polities and cultures: the Caliphate is too young, immature, and weak in mind to intellectually surpass Cyril's East Roman education and heritage.

[107] 'римляиномь въси даемь дань', ibid., 6.40.
[108] 'Богъ нашь' яко и поучина есть мор'ска', ibid., 6.17.
[109] Ibid., 6.19.

What is notable about the framing of these arguments, is that they reflect Cyril's education not only through their form—he presents *gnome*-esque sayings and syllogistic question-and-answer arguments to persuade his interlocutors—but also through their content. The debate with Muslim scholars covers a number of relatively undogmatic questions. In these cases, the Muslim scholars' questions try to trick Cyril. They ask him to interpret demonic signs, to explain the Caliph's miraculous garden, and eventually how he knows so much. All of these permit him to impress with his rhetorical abilities alone. But there are also more explicitly doctrinal questions, whether that be questioning Christians' general loyalty to Christ, their commitment to the Trinity, or their specific failure to emulate Christ and pay their taxes (to the Arabs).

Throughout Cyril's disputations with Muslim scholars, the author barely resorts to scripture. Cyril uses one short allusion to the Old Testament to further his case that God is like the depth of the sea (Isaiah, 53:8).[110] The only use of the New Testament is occasioned by the Muslim scholars' accusation that Christians do not turn the other cheek, in which *they* quote from Luke 6.27–9.[111] His response is rather unpersuasive, but he cites two short passages from Luke (6.28) and John (15.13).[112] The contrast between this and his more liberal use of scriptural quotations or close allusions at the Khazar court and against the Venetians is striking. In both those cases, interspersed citation dominates Cyril's words. These citations number forty in the prolonged Khazar disputes and sixteen in the long speech against the Venetians, some of which are over ten lines long.[113]

In short, the text bases Cyril's rhetoric against the Muslims at the Caliph's court on a defence of the heritage of the Roman state, as tax collector, and Hellenic education. Since the empire predates Islam and the Caliphate both in its claims to Roman territory and in its older Hellenic educational models, it surpasses the Caliphate in the 'depths' of its intellectual and divine understanding.

The Khazar Debates

The debates at the Khazar court are not only the longest but also the broadest and most wide-ranging in content (see Table 2). They occur not long after the second wave of Cyril's education—in Hebrew and Samaritan speech and books. Although the Khagan speaks along with others identified as knowing a lot about the Muslim faith but not explicitly as Muslims, the bulk of this debate is with Jewish scholars.

It seems clear that contemporary literature and tensions within the Byzantine polity influenced the length and centrality of this dispute in the *VC*. The ninth

[110] Ibid., 6.17–18. [111] Ibid., 6.34. [112] Ibid., 6.38.

[113] These are identified by Angelov and Kodov in their edition, see: Kliment, *Subrani*, vol. 3, pp. 120–41.

century saw both the failed mission to convert the Khazars, and a surge in anti-Jewish writing, made sharper by the association between Jews and iconoclasm.[114] The supposedly official *Letter of the Three Patriarchs* to Emperor Theophilos dated to around 836, for instance, records four tales 'at that time being disseminated in Constantinople' about Jews attacking Christian images.[115] This may well explain the passage in the *VC* dispute (10.82–8) in which the Jews ask about Christians' idol worship, in a way rather reminiscent of the treatment of the iconoclast Patriarch John VIII, only a few pages earlier in the text (5.17–24).

Khristo Trendafilov's aforementioned monograph devoted to the Khazar polemic sought to illuminate the sources of the disputations and concluded that no clear and direct sources are identifiable.[116] I take Cyril's Khazar disputation, therefore, as an original authorial composition and compilation of otherwise standard anti-Jewish tropes in Byzantine literature. I leave open the possibility that (Greek) sources for parts of the text can be found and that, as the *VC* notes, some of these may come from Cyril's own writings.[117] But even so, this section ought to be considered as collated, compiled, and ordered, by the author of the *VC*. Thus, I seek to elevate the author at the expense of Cyril and focus on the rhetorical framing and structure of the dispute as it stands within the *VC*.

[114] The Khazars' conversion to Judaism is generally dated to 861, so within Cyril's lifetime. On the nature of this conversion see: J. Shepard, 'The Khazars' Formal Adoption of Judaism and Byzantium's Northern Policy', *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, 31 (1998), pp. 11–34; C. Zuckerman, 'On the Date of the Khazars' Conversion to Judaism and the Chronology of the Kings of the Rus Oleg and Igor', *Revue des études Byzantines*, 53 (1995), pp. 201–30. More generally on anti-Jewish writing: C. Mango, *The Homilies of Photius Patriarch of Constantinople* (Washington, DC, 1958), p. 15; R. Bonfil, 'Continuity and Discontinuity (641–1204)', in R. Bonfil et al, eds., *Jews in Byzantium: Dialects of Minority and Majority Cultures* (Leiden, 2014), pp. 65–100, at p. 76; A. Cameron, 'Disputations, Polemical Literature and the Formation of Opinion in the Early Byzantine Period', in G. Reinink and H. Vanstiphout, eds., *Dispute Poems and Dialogues in the Ancient and Medieval Near East: Forms and Types of Literary Debates in Semitic and Related Literatures* (Leuven, 1991), pp. 91–108, at p.107; K. Aron-Beller, 'Byzantine Tales of Jewish Image Desecration: Tracing a Narrative', *Jewish Culture and History*, 18 (2017), pp. 1–26. And more specifically on the use of Old Testament scripture to claim Byzantium as the true elect in the ninth century: S. Eshel, *The Concept of Elect Nation in Byzantium* (Leiden, 2018), pp. 86–138, esp. pp. 89–91.

[115] Aron-Beller, 'Byzantine Tales of Jewish Image Desecration', p. 13. Some of the editors of the letter make more of its authenticity than Aron-Beller. See: *The Letter of the Three Patriarchs to Emperor Theophilos and Related Texts*, eds. J. A. Munitiz et al. (Camberley, 1997), pp. xvii–xxxviii. The stories of Jewish image desecration are found on p. 46.

[116] 'This search for more or less likely parallels with Christian hagiographical literature can continue, but it seems to us, its results are unlikely to go beyond the near coincidence of individual scenes, recurrent formulae and analogous themes'. ('Това издирване на повече или по-малко вероятни паралели с християнската житийна книжнина може да продължи, но, струва ни се, неговите резултати едва ли ще надвърлят приблизителното съвпадение на отделни сцени, устойчиви формули и аналогична тематика'.), Trendafilov, *Khazarskata Polemika*, p. 104.

[117] 'from these many [refutations], we, having shortened them, laid a few here […] whoever wishes to find these complete and holy refutations, will find them in his books, which our Archbishop Methodios translated having divided them into eight parts'. ('ѡть многа же се мы оукрацьше въ малѣ положихѡмь […]. А иже хощеть съвръшен'ныихъ сихъ вєсѣдьь искати и светыхъ, въ книгахъ єго ѡбрѣщеть є, елико прѣдложи оучитель нашь архіепископоуть Мефодіе раздѣль є на ѡсмь словесъ'), *VC*, 10.95–6.

The dispute at the Khazar court, with Jewish scholars in particular, engages broadly in two types of question. The first are dogmatic disagreements on specific issues such as the Trinity (9.15–22), pork and rabbit (10.89–94), and idol worship (10.82–8). The second are fundamental debates about the validity of the New Testament, and the legitimacy of Christians as the inheritors of the true religion. In all these matters, and in the dispute as a whole, Cyril does not use any citations from the New Testament. Instead, his materials come precisely from the Hebrew and Samaritan books he acquired in the second phase of his education.

The argument concerning the Trinity occurs in the same twofold fashion both at the Caliph's court and at the Khazar court: the first question is to do with the worship of more than one entity and therefore more than one God, and the second, is to do with the belief that Mary, a woman, could not have given birth to God.

When the question is raised by the Muslim scholars at the Caliph's court, Cyril's answer is short on evidence, simply pointing generically to the Chalcedonian position:

> мы оубо добрѣ иесмы навыкли wтъ пророкьь и wтъ отьць и wтъ оучителью троицоу славити, отьць и слово и доухь, три ипостаси въ иединомь соущьствѣ[118]
>
> We are taught well from the prophets and (Church) fathers and teachers to praise the Trinity, Father, and Word and Spirit, three *hypostases* in one essence

At the Khazar court on the other hand, Cyril turns to the Old Testament prophet Isaiah to find allusions justifying the Trinity:

> тѣмь же мы боль'шеи творимь вещ'ми сказающе и пророкьь слꙋшающе, рече бо Исая: 'слоушаите мене, Iакwве, Iзраилю, иегоже азь зовоу, азь иесмь пръвыи, азь иесмь въ вѣкы, ныня господь посла ме и доухь иего'[119]
>
> In this way, we do better, by demonstrating this [i.e. the legitimacy of the Trinity] with examples, listening to the prophets. For Isaiah said: 'Hear me, Jacob, and Israel, whom I have called, I am the first, I endure in the ages (48.12), and God now sent me and his Spirit (48.16)'

When speaking to the Arabs an allusion to evidence suffices, but it becomes a necessity to provide examples when speaking to the Jews. Different epistemological standards for proof can be taken in different circumstances, as different audiences and their level of knowledge require different methods of argumentation. Furthermore, these different audiences necessitate Cyril's education, since he does not argue with Old Testament scripture until he has acquired the Old Testament languages.

[118] Ibid., 6.30. [119] Ibid., 9.21–2.

The second question, of Mary's legitimacy, also provokes two very different responses. As Mary features in the Qur'an, all Cyril has to do when debating with Muslims is refer to her. Namely:

> слово же то въпльти се въ дѣвѣ и роди се нашего ради съпасенія, якоже и Мах'меть вашь пророкь свѣдѣтелствѹѥть, написавь сице: 'послахѡмь доухь нашь къ дѣвѣи извол'ше, да родить'[120]
>
> The word that he [Christ] became flesh in the virgin and was born on account of our salvation, is also witnessed by your prophet Muhammad, who has written thus: 'we have sent our Spirit to the Virgin (alludes to: Sura 19.17), having willed that she give birth (alludes to: Sura 19.19)'[121]

As Vavřínek has noted, the Sura 19, which deals with the story of Mary is the most commonly cited Quranic text in Byzantine anti-Islamic literature, and hardly reveals a deep knowledge of Arabic or Islam.[122] To Jewish scholars, however, whose scripture has no direct mention of the holiness of Mary, Cyril has to deduce the possibility of God becoming a man from the first principles of creation set out in Genesis.

The argument has three logical stages. First, the Jews are asked 'what is the most worthy of all visible things?', and they establish that it is man.[123] Second, the argument asserts that it is possible for God to reveal himself through clouds, storms, thunder, and smoke as he did to Moses and Job.[124] And thirdly, it follows necessarily that God can also reveal himself through man who is superior to clouds, storms, thunder. Finally, the argument concludes with a quotation, compiled from statements by Moses in Exodus, alluding to the realisation of this possibility. Namely, God not only can but also will reveal himself:

> 'въ громѣ камении и гласѣ трѹб'нѣмь' не являи ны се к томоу, господи щедрыи, нъ 'всели се въ наше оутробы ѡтѥмь наше грѣхы'[125]
>
> Do not appear to us any longer, merciful God, in a 'stone thunder and a trumpet voice' (alludes to: Exodus, 19.16), but 'instil yourself in our wombs, taking away our sins' (alludes to: Exodus, 34.9)

[120] *VC*, 6.31.

[121] The actual Sura 19.17–22 reads: 'then We sent unto her Our Spirit that presented himself to her a man without fault. She said, "I take refuge in the All-merciful from thee! If thou fearest God…". He said, "I am but a messenger come from thy Lord, to give thee a boy most pure". She said, "How shall I have a son whom no mortal has touched, neither have I been unchaste?" He said, "Even so thy Lord has said: 'Easy is that for Me; and that We may appoint him a sign unto men and a mercy from Us; it is a thing decreed"'. So, she conceived him, and withdrew with him to a distant place', *The Qur'an*, http://tanzil.net/#trans/en.arberry (last accessed: September 2023).

[122] Vavřínek, 'A Byzantine Polemic against Islam', p. 538.

[123] 'что ѥсть ѡть видимыѥ твары чъстинѣиши въсѣхь?', *VC*, 9.26–7.

[124] Ibid., 9.28. [125] Ibid., 9.33.

This final stage is a bit of a fudge, as the author is using the words of Moses very loosely. The Septuagint simply notes 'let my Lord go with us' ('*συμπορευθήτω ὁ Κύριός μου μεθ' ἡμῶν*') and does not mention being instilled in a womb.[126]

In any case, the text reveals different standards of evidence when discussing the same issues with different people. It also reveals different rhetorical techniques for different audiences: logical syllogism, choice quotations, or sometimes the choice to not use quotations. The text is, thus, in itself, an argument for grammatical, logical, and rhetorical education.

Whilst questions such as the one discussed above take up some of the debate with the Jews, as noted at the start of this section, the second type of questions about the legitimacy of Christianity as inheritor of the true religion are more prominent. These questions cover a series of topics, the most central being the Jews' claim that they follow the oldest law of God (10.2–35) and the question of whether the kingdom of God has already come (10.36–63). But whether Jews as the people of Shem, will inherit the kingdom (10.64–7), and whether it is right to abandon circumcision (10.75–81) are also a part of the debate.

This section in the text is extremely significant, as Cyril's disputation has to be framed completely differently from that with the Muslims. He can no longer rely on historic legitimacy through former territorial control, an older Hellenic educational system, or religious maturity. Rather, in this section, Cyril is left to defend the younger religion. In the *VC*, Christianity's relationship to Islam runs parallel to Judaism's relationship to Christianity.

Ultimately, as Bonfil notes, 'issued from Judaism, Christianity never succeeded in denying such filiation'.[127] Thus, Cyril's disputation is largely concerned with the legitimisation of Christianity as a successor. As above with the question of Mary, Cyril is enabled by his Hellenic education on the one hand to formulate syllogistic argumentation, and by his education in Hebrew and Samaritan, to do this with the Old Testament text.

This defence of inheritance and change is clearest in the two most central issues of the dispute: firstly, the question of which is the oldest law and whether the people of God ought to follow that one; and secondly, whether the kingdom of God has already come. On the first issue, Cyril engages with the Jews' argument that the law of Moses is the first law of God and that the Christian one is later and so less legitimate.[128]

Rather than defend the New Testament or the words of Christ, the author argues that there are in fact *older* laws, and that the Jews have themselves chosen a newer one.[129] God first gave law to Noah, after the fall.[130] The Jews offer the

[126] *Septuagint: The Greek Old Testament*, Exodus, 34.9.
[127] Bonfil, 'Continuity and Discontinuity', p. 74.
[128] *VC*, 10.4.
[129] Ibid., 10.11.
[130] Ibid.

refutation that God gave a 'testament' ('завѣть', '*διαθήκη*') rather than a 'law' ('законь', '*νόμος*') to Noah, but gave an actual law to Moses.[131] Cyril responds with a series of scriptural quotations in which the words are used interchangeably, so as to demonstrate that a testament is a law.[132] The whole exercise moves toward a defence of succession:

> добрѣ дѣемь, аще бо бы Аврамь не ѥл' се по wбрѣзаніе, нъ држаль Ноѥвь завѣть, не бы се божіи дрⷭга нарекль и Мwуси же, послѣди пакы написавь законь пръваго не дрьжа. Такожде и мыи по сихь образⷭ ходимь и wть бога законь приѥмше дрьжимь[133]
>
> And we do well, since if Abraham had not accepted circumcision, but held on to the testament of Noah, he would not be called God's friend, and Moses too, later when he wrote a law again, did not hold on to the previous one, and in this way, we, following his example, having received a law from God, we follow it.

Thus, even though God did not say to Noah that he will give another law in future, it ought to be understood that when he does, the succeeding law is the most pleasing to God.[134] Christians therefore, through this succession, have received the most worthy law.

As noted above, this position is ideologically at odds with the position taken in the *VC* against Muslims. This becomes most obvious on the question of whether the kingdom of God has already come. As Trendafilov has noted, in answering this question Cyril's rhetoric in dispute with the Khazars offers a direct contradiction of the argument made against Muslims.[135]

Namely, to the Muslims, Cyril defended the Christian practice of not paying taxes to the Arabs by insisting that 'we all pay taxes to the Romans'.[136] The legitimacy of the Christians comes from their association with the Roman Empire and its historic continuity. At the Khazar court, however, the identification of Christians with the Roman state is abandoned altogether. Rather, Cyril tells the Jewish scholars that 'Jerusalem has fallen and that the animal sacrifices have ceased, and all that the prophets prophesised about you has come to be'.[137] They ask in return: if this is true, 'how is it that the Roman kingdom ("tsarstvo") holds power till now?'[138]

> не дрьжить се, мимо шло бо ѥсть яко и прwча [...] наше бо царство нѣсть рим'ско нъ Христосово [...] римляне идолѣхь прилежахⷭ, сіи же овь wть сего овь оть иного єзыка и племене въ Христово име царствⷭють[139]

[131] Ibid., 10.16. [132] Ibid., 10.17–18. [133] Ibid., 10.20–1. [134] Ibid., 10.22–34.
[135] Trendafilov, *Khazarskata polemika*, p. 62. [136] 'римляиномь въси даѥмь дань', *VC*, 6.47.
[137] 'Іерусалимь съкрⷭшень ѥсть и жрьтвы пръстали соуть и въсе се ѥсть събыло, ѥже соуть пророци прорекли w васъ', ibid., 10.36–7.
[138] 'како рим'ское царство доселѣ дрьжит' владычьство?', ibid., 10.51. [139] Ibid., 10.52–6.

> It does not, for it has passed as the former ones […] our kingdom ('tsarstvo') is not Roman, but Christian, […] The Romans worshipped idols, but now, one from one, and one from another people and tribe, rule in the name of Christ

This statement, equating Byzantium with the fifth monarchy, or kingdom without end, was not an uncommon rendering of the Old Testament prophesy of Daniel.[140] But given the direct claim to Roman continuity against the Muslims only a few pages prior in the narrative, it is a testament to Cyril's rhetorical flexibility in form and content. As Kustas notes in his study of the development of Christian rhetoric after late antiquity, the Christian rhetor was no longer dealing with what is possible or feasible, but was dealing with divine truth.[141] As such the rhetor could use both clarity and obscurity at different times for different purposes, because both were ultimately revealing the same.[142] As in this case, it is possible to make contradictory statements, therefore, in order to make the most persuasive argument for Christianity, as the truth of Christianity operates beyond the truth or consistency of individual statements made by Christians.

But there is more to this statement than inconsistency. As noted at the start of this section, this chapter seeks to demonstrate that the order of these disputes, and the information they utilise, whether scriptural or not, is not random. Rather, the narrative of Cyril's education and the disputations it prepares him to perform, also stands in as a symbol of the different phases of Christian history. In the dispute with Muslims, the text sits in the state of the Romans and celebrates their territory and educational history. By the dispute with the Jews, Rome has fallen, and the prophesies have been realised. According to this logic, the next stage, and therefore final dispute, must be in and with the New Testament: a move from what Kustas aptly describes as the 'obscurity' of the Old Testament, whose events were both real and immediate, and also 'veiled foreshadowings', to the 'clear and revealed light' of the New Testament to come.[143] This final stage in Cyril's geographical, rhetorical, and temporal journey is addressed below.

The Latin Debate

There is an almost comical disparity between the breadth of topics Cyril disputes with Jews and Muslims, and the narrowness of those discussed with Latins, above

[140] See: Anastos, 'Political Theory in the Lives of the Slavic Saints', pp. 17–29; P. Magdalino and R. Nelson, 'Introduction', in their eds., *The Old Testament in Byzantium* (Washington, DC, 2006), pp. 14, 20–4, 28.

[141] G. L. Kustas, *Studies in Byzantine Rhetoric* (Thessaloniki, 1973), pp. 27–8.

[142] Ibid., p. 95.

[143] Kustas, *Studies in Byzantine Rhetoric*, p. 95.

all the issue of trilingualism (see Table 3).[144] In some senses, this is not obvious, given that the *VC*'s compilation dates to a period of papal schism over Photios and the conversion of Bulgaria, and the formalisation of anti-Latin literature.[145] In some ways, the late ninth century is as good a time for anti-Latin sentiment as it is for anti-Jewish sentiment in Byzantium. Yet, the *VC* is silent on the *filioque*, even though the papal letters of John VIII may imply that this was a real issue in the bishopric of Methodios himself.[146] And the text is well disposed toward the pope.[147]

There are two possible reasons for this narrowness of focus. The first is to do with the relics of St Clement, which as the *VC* notes, Cyril brought to Rome. The translation of the relics is amongst the only events in the *VC* which finds contemporary confirmation in a Latin letter by Anastasius the Librarian.[148] The event was clearly well received and resulted in Cyril's recognition in the Latin church.[149] More pertinently, the second reason may be to do with the possible profile of the author of the *VC*. After his education in Constantinople, Cyril is given the title 'librarian' ('вивлотикарь'). As Ševčenko has shown, the word is otherwise unattested in Slavonic, and only attested in Byzantine Greek in the ninth century with reference to Latin officials in the curia of the pope in Rome, like Anastasius the Librarian ('bibliothecarus').[150] This, Ševčenko argues, offers some insight into the kind of Greek-speaking, but at least at some point Rome-dwelling intellectual circles responsible for the compilation of the *VC*—deeply acquainted not only with Byzantine court culture, but also with Roman official hierarchies.[151] Certainly, if the life was composed shortly after Cyril's death (ca. 869) as seems most likely, it was therefore most probably composed in Rome.

[144] See Tables 1, 2, and 3 above.

[145] See: F. Dvornik, *The Photian Schism: History and Legend* (Cambridge, 1948); L. Simeonova, *Diplomacy of the Letter and the Cross, Photios, Bulgaria and the Papacy, 860s–880s* (Amsterdam, 1998); T. Kolbaba, *Inventing Latin Heretics: Byzantines and the Filioque in the Ninth Century* (Kalamazoo, MI, 2008).

[146] Kolbaba, *Inventing Latin Heretics*, pp. 51–2. In one letter, John VIII calls Methodios to Rome as he has found that he is not preaching 'the things which the Holy Roman church learned from the first apostles and preaches daily' ('que sancta Romana ecclesia ab ipso apostolorum principe dedicit et cottidie predicat'). Given that the letter later addresses the fact Methodios is preaching in Slavonic as a separate issue, it seems possible that the disagreement is to do with the creed. John VIII, *Letters*, 201, pp. 160–1.

[147] In the *VC,* the pope invites Cyril and Methodios to Rome, and welcomes a liturgy in Slavonic. He also insists that Cyril is buried in the Vatican. *VC*, 17–18. Although as Tia Kolbaba has shown, this kind of respect for the pope is not entirely unusual. even in early anti-Latin, filioque-related literature. Kolbaba, *Inventing Latin Heretics*, p. 153.

[148] Anastasius the Librarian, *Letters*, 15, in Anastasius Bibliothecarius, *Epistolae sive Praefationes*, ed. E. Caspar (Berlin, 1912–28), pp. 436–8.

[149] More on this in Chapter 3.

[150] I. Ševčenko, 'Constantine-Cyril, Apostle of the Slavs, as "Bibliothecary", or how Byzantine was the Author of Constantine's *Vita*?', in B. Nagy and M. Sebok, eds., *The Man of Many Devices Who Wandered Full Many Ways: Festschrift in Honour of János M. Bak* (Budapest, 1999), pp. 214–21.

[151] Ibid., pp. 218–19.

Perhaps even more peculiar than the pope's presentation as a protagonist, is the idiosyncrasy of Cyril's stand against the Latins: namely, their defence of trilingualism, or the idea that there are only three holy languages, Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. This too suggests the author was well acquainted with Latinate intellectual currents.

As Francis Thomson has demonstrated, the idea that there were only three holy languages was not widespread in Greek literature, and it only appears in much later sources, unrelated to missionary work.[152] Yulia Minets has shown that, late antique Greek clerics might mention the three languages occasionally but they 'did not feel a need to reaffirm the status of their tongue by resorting to the ideological construct of "three sacred languages"'.[153] The situation in the West is more complex, however. The identification of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew as the three holy languages was commonplace in late antique Latin texts, part of the clerical elites' desperate attempt to 'profile Latin as a non-barbarian language'.[154] It makes sense therefore that Latin clerics would bring this up, theoretically. Yet aside from this vague group of Venetians mentioned in the text, there is no other evidence of active resistance to vernacular languages at the time of the *VC*'s composition (although this would change by the late ninth century). So, it is difficult to assess how widespread this idea of 'trilingualism' was, let alone assess whether it was ever deemed a heresy.

The question of the dispute and its topic's historicity, however, ought not to distract from its significance in the structure of Cyril's disputations as they are presented in the *VC*. As noted above, a discourse with Christians is the natural conclusion to Cyril's spatial and temporal transition from Hellenic arts and pagan imperialism, through Old Testament prophesies and peoples. The style and method of disputation are key, therefore, to expressing this.

First and foremost, as noted above, only one issue is under discussion in the *VC*, and that is whether or not there should be only three holy languages. The audience, the aforementioned 'bishops, priests, and monks' in Venice, only offer one accusation and do not intervene or respond again. As ever, Cyril's method of argumentation is not random. At first, he resorts to contemporary reality:

> мы же роды знаемь книгы оумѣюще и богоу славѫ вѫздающе своим єзыкомь кѫждо. Явѣ же соуть сіи: армени, пер'си, авдз'гы, ивери, соуг'ди, годи, wбри, тѫрси, козари, даравляне, єгуп'ти и инін мнwзы[155]
>
> for we know many peoples who have knowledge of books and praise God in their own language, it is known that these are: Armenians, Persians, Abkhazians, Iberians, Sogdians, Goths, Avars, Turks, Khazars, Arabs, Egyptians and many others.

[152] F. J. Thomson, 'SS. Cyril and Methodios and a Mythical Western Heresy: Trilingualism. A Contribution to the Study of Patristic and Mediaeval Theories of Sacred Languages', *Analecta Bollandiana*, 110 (1992), pp. 67–122, esp. pp. 71, 94–5.

[153] Y. Minets, *The Slow Fall of Babel: Languages and Identities in Late Antique Christianity* (Cambridge, 2021), pp. 258.

[154] Ibid., pp. 260–9.

[155] *VC*, 16.7.

This is the first instance in the *VC* where Cyril tries to use the current state of affairs as an argument. Against the Muslims, his legitimacy comes from what used to be; against the Jews, he tried to argue through interpreting past prophesy that the Kingdom of God they believe is yet to come has in fact come already. It is only once arguing with the Latins, in this third stage of his disputational cycle, that he is truly in the present.

Cyril fears, however, that this kind of category of evidence is wasted on his interlocutors, and so he notes: 'If you do not wish to understand from these (examples), then at least know (God's) judgement from the (holy) writing'.[156]

What follows are two full pages of scriptural citations concerned with the significance of the spreading of faith. The citations are simply connected by the phrases 'and again', or 'also Mark says' (Table 4).

As is evident, this is in no way like the method of disputation Cyril uses against Muslims and Jews. Rather, Cyril turns to another standard method of theological argumentation. There are no logical, or syllogistic steps, no argumentative structure, no induction or interpretation, and no opposition from his interlocutors. Rather, this is an argument entirely based on accumulation. As Cyril shares the holy texts with his audience, he does not need to persuade them, but rather simply points them to the revealed truth. There is a sense, therefore, that scriptural proof is given because it is indisputable. It is no surprise that the education Cyril receives prior to this argument is unequivocally one of divine intervention: God reveals Slavonic letters to him, and with them Cyril himself *writes* the Gospel of John. The dominance of the New Testament, and specifically the Gospels, suggests that just as his education needs no assistance from grammar or rhetoric,

Table 4 Scriptural quotations in the Venetian Speech

Lines of quote	Source of Quote[157]
16.10	Psalm 95.1
16.11	Psalm 97.4
16.12	Psalm 65.4
16.13	Psalm 116.1, 150.6
16.14	John 1.12
16.15	John 17.20–1
16.16	Matthew, 28.18–20
16.17	Mark, 16.15–17
16.18	Matthew 23.13
16.19	Luke, 11.52
16.21–57	1 Corinthians 14.4–40

[156] 'аще ли не хощете wть сихъ разѹмѣ, понѣ wть книгъ познаите соудїю', ibid., 16.9.
[157] As identified in: Kliment, *Subrani*, vol. 3, pp. 138–9.

their clarity also requires no additional comment or explanation. As such, Cyril's education in Hellenic arts or the Old Testament languages is not relevant when arguing with Christians. Because in this final stage, both geographically and temporally, one has arrived in the kingdom of God, and there is essentially no possibility to refute or disagree with the words of the New Testament.

In some sense, this in itself contradicts the earlier charge made by Cyril against his Muslim audience, that the teachings of their religion are 'easy and accessible' in contrast with those of Christianity. But the structure of the *VC* does not permit direct ascension to divine revelation. The *VC* makes clear that the path towards revealed truth is one through Hellenic and Old Testament education, and through the confrontation with heathens against whom a defence of the Christian faith needs to be formulated in intellectually varied ways. Thus, it is not 'easy and accessible' to receive the gospel from God, as what must come before is the intellectual preparation of education and disputation.

The stance of the scriptural quotations chosen in the *VC* confirms this too. They all in one way or another promote the expansion of Christianity, and reprimand those who oppose it. They insist that all people glorify God, in all lands and all languages, and they encourage apostolic activity: 'go unto the whole world and preach the gospel to all living things' (Mark 23.13).[158] More than a third of the speech, and its conclusion, is a passage on the intelligibility and good order in worship from the Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, 14–40. The significance of languages, learning languages, and travelling to the ends of the world to spread the words of God is key in the passage. This clearly alludes to Cyril's own education in Hebrew, 'ros'sky', and Samaritan. The manifesto for missionary activity in the Epistle, therefore, is a reflection upon the first two stages of Cyril's life and disputations—his transitions through non-Christian lands. In a sense, the *VC* suggests that it is not possible to achieve the third phase, of indisputable clarity in Christian truth, without acknowledging, educating, and debating through the former two. However, once such a status is achieved, 'outside' education and missionary activity still remains the responsibility of Christians.

Conclusions: Converting the Silent?

The *VC* is a manifesto for the utility of 'outside' education in the process of consolidating the orthodox faith. Yet despite the evidence for the significance of outside education in successfully formulating arguments against representatives of other Abrahamic religions, no Muslim, Jew, or Latin Christian in the narrative ever converts.

[158] *VC*, 16.17.

More generally, there is a notable difference between the kinds of opponents Cyril argues with for which an actual account of the dispute is given, and the kinds of opponents with whom Cyril's persuasiveness is merely summarised. The *VC* offers full accounts of disputations between Cyril and the patriarch John VII, Muslims, Jews, and Latins. More specifically, the audience for Cyril's disputation comes from a particular social profile. In the Caliphate, as noted above, he speaks to 'wise men, learned in the books of geometry and astronomy and other such teachings'.[159] At the Khazar court, Cyril is once again arguing with the learned bookmen of Judaism and Islam: the Khagan asks specifically for a 'bookish man' ('мѫжа книжна') to dispute with the other religious representatives at his court.[160] Those who speak at court are only the Jews, Saracens, Cyril, and the Khagan himself. Lastly, in Venice, Cyril explicitly argues with: 'bishops, priests, and monks' ('єпископи и попове и чрънориз'ци').[161] Thus, the only opponents warranting the possibility for a full disputation, are those of the other Abrahamic religions, with some—either more or less explicitly invoked—education.

There are no attempts to offer accounts of Cyril's words with the lesser, local Khazar general ('voivoda') threatening to besiege a Christian city, the 'Ougri' (likely Hungarians or Turks) threatening to murder Cyril, or in fact, the Slavs in Moravia who practise a mixture of old pagan beliefs alongside the trilingual heresy.[162] In all these instances, Cyril speaks, whether 'didactic' words or with the 'fire of the words', but his audience remains silent or at best utters a question, or a short response.

In part, of course, the author of the *VC* had no Byzantine ammunition against tribes whose very identification and existence is disputed. Unlike the standard tropes available to be deployed against Jews and Muslims, the *VC* reveals a struggle to imagine the ways in which unknown people may conduct themselves or engage with religious discourse. Nonetheless, their silence suggests a more general association between paganism, or pagans, and silence or speechlessness. If, as George Kustas argues, Christianity used pagan literature and rhetoric to forge a 'conception of the living power of the logos with which words are now invested and the function of which they aim to serve' as inherently expressing God's genius and his divine plan, then it is perhaps unsurprising that those who have no God have little to say.[163]

The people of Ful or Fud in some other manuscripts, found en route to the Khazar court, are the only exception to this scheme. They offer some refutation in defence of their tree worship.[164] The interaction is unique in other ways which may explain this exceptionality. Cyril reproaches the tribe for turning away from God, even though they are spoken of in scripture. To make this point, the saint cites Isaiah 66.18–19 which notes that God will go among all peoples, including

[159] 'моудраа чедьь, книгъ наоучена геѡметріи и астрономіи и прочимь оученіемь', ibid., 6.14.
[160] Ibid., 8.5. [161] Ibid., 16.1. [162] Ruler: *VC*, 8.19–22; Ougri: 8.22–25; Slavs: 15.10–17.
[163] Kustas, *Studies in Byzantine Rhetoric*, p. 55.
[164] They insist that they are not worshipping idols, for they did not themselves create the tree. *VC*, 12.13–15.

'Tharsis, and Ful, and Lud, and Mosoch, and to Thobel, and to Greece'.[165] Perhaps the author wants us to symbolically identify the people Cyril meets, possibly the people of the attested city of Ful in the Crimea, with a biblical tribe mentioned in the Old Testament, named 'Phud' in the Septuagent or 'Ful' in the Hebrew Old Testament traditions, and now commonly identified with the Lybians.[166] This connection to an Old Testament tribe, even if not historically sustainable, strengthens Cyril's apostolic character. Cyril is the realisation of the prophesy that God will send men to the people of Ful. Perhaps it is this prophetic role, that warrants the people of Ful the ability to speak, albeit only once.

Despite the short exchange with the people of Ful, the division between long set-piece disputes with representatives of other Abrahamic religions, and short summaries of the conversion or taming of lesser-known pagans stands. Aside from the silence of the godless, this reveals an interesting paradox. Cyril's words are most successful when he is speaking to pagans. In the case of the Ful for instance, the text notes, that 'having spoken soft words to them he persuaded them to cut the tree and burn it'.[167] Failing immediate conversion, Cyril secures the promise of conversion from others, like the local Khazar general attempting to besiege a Christian city. This too, he does with his words:

> […] бесѣдовав' же с нимь и оучителнаа словеса прѣдложи и оукроти его и обѣщавь се емоу на крьщение възврати же се философь въ свои поуть[168]
>
> […] and having spoken with him and offered him didactic words, he tamed him and when [the ruler] promised him that he will be baptised, the philosopher went on his way

The same promises are made at the Khazar court. After seven pages of disputation with Jews and men who know about Islam, a large group is introduced: 'nearly

[165] 'фарьсь фѳль и Лоудь и Мосохь и фовель и въ ѥлладоу', ibid., 12.17.

[166] On the location of the city and the bishopric of Ful: A. L. Yakobskon, 'K Voprosu o lokalizatsii srednovekovnogo goroda Fuully', *Sovetskaia arheologiia*, 29–30 (1959), pp. 108–14; C. Zuckerman, 'Byzantium's Pontic Policy in the *Notitiae Episcopatuum*', in his ed., *La Crimée entre Byzance et le Khaganat Khazar* (Paris, 2006), pp. 201–30. On Ful as a biblical people: I. M. Mogarichev, 'K voprosu o prebyvanii Konstantina Filosofa v Krymu', in his ed. *Problemy istorii i arkheologii Ukrainy. Materialy X Mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferencii, posviashchennoi 125-letiiu professora K. E. Grinevicha, 4–5 noiabria 2016 goda* (Kharkiv, 2016), p. 61. Dimitur Angelov has argued that the fact the text opts for Ful rather than Phud suggests that Cyril truly knew Hebrew and is citing the Hebrew Old Testament. However, it is clear from the rendering of the other names in the list, the text cited is the Greek. The *VC* replaces the people of Javan in the Hebrew old testament with those of Greece (*Ελλάδας*) and adds the people of Mosoch (*Μοσὸχ*) who are absent from the Hebrew. The rigidity of the Septuagint's tradition, especially with regards to proper names, makes the most likely explanation either the ease of misreading the capital *Λ* and *Δ* or the author's ingenious manipulation of the Old Testament tribal name from Fud to Ful, in order to match the Crimean city of the same name. I am grateful to Professor Sebastian Brock for his help with this question. Angelov's case is found in: Kliment, *Subrani*, vol. 3, p. 153.

[167] 'тако же глад'кыми словеси оуглаголавь ихь повелѣ имь посѣщи дрѣво и съжещи', *VC*, 12.20–4.

[168] Ibid., 8.20.

two hundred of them were converted' and, the Khazar elite promised, the rest will be converted over time too.[169] This large but previously unmentioned audience has been sitting silent all along.

In short, the author is not always able to conjure up the sorts of words Cyril may have said to these people, and is even less capable of conjuring up the sorts of words they may have said to him. But there is no doubt in the text that these largely silent audiences are able to comprehend his words and be persuaded by them. The *VC* is unwavering in its certainty that those with the right education are able to spread the faith.

The firmness of the text's position on missionary activity was by no means ubiquitous in Middle Byzantine intellectual circles. As shown by Sergei Ivanov, positions on the need for mission were ever-shifting, and there was a case made against spreading the Gospel in the ninth century, as putting pearls before swine.[170] Perhaps the contrast between the embarrassed but unchanged Muslims, Jews, and Latins, and the largely silent but converted pagans, reveals resignation to the existence of alternative Religions of the Book. Thus, the Abrahamic opponents are left as frozen rhetorical positions to be disputed with, guiding a narrative trajectory through the three phases of Christian temporality. To turn to pagans instead is, as far as the text is concerned, a good and necessary compromise.

[169] 'крьсти же се ѡть нихъ до двою стѫ', *VC*, 11.40.

[170] Ivanov, *'Pearls before Swine'*, pp. 89–90.

3

Learned Saints between Rome and Constantinople

The *VC* in Context

This chapter seeks to position the *VC*'s representation of learning and missionary activity in a ninth-century intellectual and intertextual context. To start with, I assess whether a Latinate or Roman Latinate context for the text is possible, before turning to contemporary Byzantine intellectual culture. I argue that the *VC*'s author was well versed in Latin offices, most probably writing in Rome, and that the issues addressed in the text might have been familiar to Roman intellectuals like Anastasius the Librarian. However, the intellectual problem the *VC* is trying to address emerges from a debate at the Constantinopolitan court. This is most evident through the fundamental differences in the portrayal of Cyril in surviving Latin-language materials—in particular, the overwhelming omission or concision of his elaborate education and disputations.

A Roman Saint

In some ways, Cyril is an unusual Byzantine saint. Unlike the local ascetics or Constantinopolitan court projects of Middle-Byzantine hagiography, stories about Cyril were transmitted in contemporary Latin sources. A positive light hangs over him in Latin documents, despite contemporary tensions between the papacy and Constantinople. This transcendence of geopolitical problems is largely due to his association with the translation of the relics of St Clement from the Crimea to Rome, and his eventual death in Rome. This translation is described in the *VC*, as well as in a contemporary letter by Anastasius the Librarian.[1] It is also depicted in an eleventh-century fresco found in the remains of the fourth-century basilica of St Clement, not far from Cyril's alleged tomb.[2] As far as our texts and images from the West indicate, it is clear that Cyril was believed to have

[1] Anastasius the Librarian, *Letters*, 15, pp. 436–8.

[2] C. Filippini, 'The Image of the Titular Saint in the Eleventh-Century Frescoes in San Clemente, Rome', *Word & Image*, 22 (2006), pp. 245–50, at p. 243; C. Filippini, *The Eleventh-Century Frescoes of San Clemente in Rome* (PhD dissertation, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University, 1999), pp. 125–46.

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brought the relics of St Clement to Rome.[3] Due to the interest in Pope Clement in Rome and the Carolingian polities, the Cyril that emerges from these materials is strikingly different from that of the *VC*.[4]

The earliest dated material concerning Cyril from Latin texts is a mention of him in a letter of Anastasius the Librarian to Pope Hadrian II, reporting on the proceedings of the 869/70 church council at Constantinople.[5] The second, and more thorough account of Cyril is in another letter by Anastasius mentioned earlier, dated to ca. 875–6, and addressed to Bishop Gauderic of Velletri, who was involved in the foundation of the chapel to St Clement, where the pope's relics were placed.[6] The letter also reveals that Gauderic was collecting materials on the *Life and Miracles of St Clement*, and had tasked Anastasius with finding additional materials from Greek sources. Anastasius proceeds to give Gauderic what he describes as a translation from a work written in Greek by Constantine-Cyril himself; this describes the finding of the relics. Alongside, Anastasius gives what he claims to be a first-person account of the relic discovery by Metrophanes of Smyrna, a bishop who was an exile in Kherson at the time.[7] In places, the text in this letter has some content-based similarities with the *VC*. This leaves a number of intertextual possibilities, which can be demonstrated by an example. Anastasius reports, on Metrophanes' authority, that Cyril sought to find the relics of St Clement in Kherson by praying to God and encouraging the local Christians to do the same:

> Super quo stupefactus philosophus se in orationem multo tempore dedit, Deum revelare, sanctum vero revelari corpus deposcens. […] omnes ad illa litora fodienda et tam pretiosas reliquias sancti martyris et apostolici inquirendas ordine, quem ipse philosophus in hystorica narratione descripsit, penitus animavit. Huc usque praedictus Metrophanes.[8]
>
> The philosopher was stunned by this and dedicated himself to a long prayer so that God reveals [this], that the holy relics are revealed to him. […] He strongly

[3] For a thorough study of the cult and its legacy in Eastern Europe, see: F. Curta and N. Williams, 'Anchor of Faith: The Cult of St Clement in Eastern Europe (ca. 500 to ca. 1500)', in *Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference 'History and Theology', Constanța (Romania), November 17–18, 2020* (Constanta, 2021), pp. 16–54.

[4] Writings attributed to Clement in Latin were circulated widely throughout the ninth century, with early manuscripts from Verona, Rome, and Gaul. In the 830–50s in particular, new texts ascribed to him continued to emerge. I am grateful to Conrad Leyser for sharing a handout with a catalogue of manuscripts pertaining to Clement from the early Middle Ages, entitled 'In Search of a Past: Canon Law, the Cult of the Saints, and the Roman Church, 860–960'. There is also an emerging interest in St Denis in the West, who is sent to Gaul by St Clement. See: S. Albrecht, 'Svatopluks Stäbe und St. Denis: Überlegungen zur Beziehung von Byzanz und Großmähren', in S. Albrecht, ed., *Großmähren und seine Nachbarn* (Berlin, 2021), pp. 181–220, at p. 216.

[5] Anastasius the Librarian, *Letters*, 5, p. 407; M. Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia (858–882): Papal Power and Political Reality* (Leiden, 2014), p. 92.

[6] Anastasius the Librarian, *Letters*, 15, pp. 436–8.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Anastasius, *Letters*, 15, p. 437

> roused everyone to dig up the shores and search for the precious relics of the holy martyr and pope, in a way in turn the philosopher himself described in his historical narrative. Thus, reports the aforementioned Metrophanes.

Some of these events are also reported in the *VC*:

> Слышав҆ше, яко светыи Клименьть еще в мори лежить, помолив҅ се рече: ‘вѣроую въ бога светѣмь клименьтѣ надѣю се, яко ѡбрѣсти юго имамь и изнести из мора҆. Оубѣждь архїепископа и съ клиросомь въсѣмь и говѣины моужи и въсѣдше въ кораблю идеще на мѣсто оутиш҆шꙋ се морꙋ вел҆ми, и дошьдьше начеше копати.[9]

> and having heard that the holy Clement still lay in the sea, he prayed, saying: ‘I believe in God and I have hope in saint Clement, that I will be able to find him and take him out of the sea’. And having persuaded the bishop, and with all the clergy and leading men, he boarded a ship and arrived at the place, while the sea became very calm, and having come they began to dig.

A number of the textual complexities of the Latin transmission are revealed in Anastasius’ passage. Anastasius claims to use a Greek oral report from Metrophanes, which Metrophanes himself says is confirmed by a textual account by Cyril which he suggests he has read. Neither Metrophanes’ report nor Cyril’s account survive outside of this letter, yet the *VC* confirms that Cyril prayed to find the relics and that Cyril and that his companions dug up the shore of the sea. The *VC* and letter however clearly do not directly cite each other. So, a number of textual relationships are possible: that Anastasius is using but paraphrasing the *VC* (and simply not saying that he is), that Metrophanes had access to the *VC* and supplemented his oral account with it, that Anastasius, Metrophanes, and the *VC* share a Greek source (which may be written by Cyril), that Metrophanes’ first-person account is accurate, or some mixture of a number of these possibilities.

This already complicated textual picture is further nuanced by the *Life and Miracles of St Clement*, begun by John Immonides, or John the Deacon, but finished by Gauderic of Velletri. This text only survives in fragments but is dedicated to Pope John VIII, who died in 883. So we can place the compilation of this *Life and Miracles of St Clement* shortly after Cyril’s death in ca. 869 and between the letters of 874/5 and the death of John VIII, in 883.[10] In the dedication, Gauderic makes it clear that his work is divided into three parts, the last of which

[9] *VC*, 8.16–17

[10] A. Milev, ‘Italianskata legenda v nova svetlina’, *Istoricheski pregled*, 12 (1956), p. 77. On the authorship of John Immonides: L. Castaldi, ‘Le dediche di Giovanni Immonide’, *Filologia mediolatina*, 17 (2010), p. 47. The text of Gauderic of Velletri and John Immonides is found in: *The Life and Miracles of Saint Clement*, in G. Orlandi, ed., *Ioannis Hymmonidis et Gauderici Veliterni, Leonis Ostiensis, Excerpta ex Clementinis Recognitionibus a Tyrannio Rufini Translatis* (Milan, 1968), pp. 1–165.

supposedly includes Clement's exile and martyrdom, and the return of his relics to Rome.[11] This third part of Gauderic's work does not survive, but it is suspected to be the *Italian Legend*, a text entitled *Vita Constantini Cyrilli cum translatione S. Clementis* in a twelfth-century manuscript under the name of Leo of Ostia, an Italian cardinal famous for his *Montecassino Chronicle*.[12] The reason for the attribution to Gauderic is to do with similarities in content between the *Italian Legend*, Anastasius' letter to Gauderic, and the *VC*. In a later manuscript however, it seems that Leo's text mentions a Greek source, but does not mention Gauderic or Metrophanes, and the *Italian Legend* is textually much closer to the *VC* than to the letter of Anastasius.[13] Resolving these numerous problems would require close examination of the two Leo of Ostia manuscripts, the Gauderic fragments, the *VC*, and Anastasius' works. This is beyond the scope of this study and may be addressed more thoroughly in Diddi's forthcoming critical edition of the *VC*. Rather, I take these Latin sources, and the *Italian Legend* in particular, as texts receiving and in discourse with a story about a philosopher called Constantine-Cyril. The way they formulate his character and sideline his education and disputations is fundamentally different from the emphasis of the *VC*. This in turn points to the fact that despite engagement with Latin culture, the *VC* sought to engage predominantly with Byzantine intellectual problems.

The *Italian Legend* opens with a summary of Cyril's youth, and covers the basic information found in the *VC*, with none of the details of his education. To explain his epithet, it simply notes that thanks to his abilities from youth, Constantine 'deserved to be called a philosopher'.[14] His parents, rather than God's will, take him to Constantinople, and with no mention of Photios, Leo, or the Hellenic arts, Constantine is ordained by the will of God.[15] After an embassy from the Khazars, whose demands and concerns are textually extremely close to the wording in the *VC*, he is sent to Khazaria.[16] The story of the discovery of the relics follows that of the *VC* very closely, but Cyril's seven-page discussion with the Khazars is represented here simply by a single sentence noting his successful refutations with the power of his eloquence.[17] The Latin text then moves from the story of the relics of St Clement to the mission to Moravia, where it also closely echoes the narrative of

[11] 'reversionis eius ad propriam sedem miracula', Gauderic of Velletri, John Immonides, *The Life and Miracles of Saint Clement*, p. 2.

[12] The only thing that does survive are fragments from parts one and two. Leo of Ostia's authorship was resolved through another fourteenth-century MS coming to light. Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, p. 97. I. Duichev, 'La Solution de quelques enigmes Cyrillo-Methodiennes', *Byzantion*, 23 (1954), p. 203.

[13] 'partim vero ex relatione inventoris eiusdem corporis, de Graecis fastidioso stilo translate', Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, p. 99.

[14] 'veraci agnomine Philosophus est appellatus', *The Italian Legend*, ed., trans. in *FLHB*, vol. 2, p. 295.

[15] 'honorem quoque sacerdotii ibidem, ordinante Deo, est adeptus', ibid.

[16] Ibid. Compare with: *VC*, 8.1–5.

[17] 'predicationibus et rationibus eloquiorum', *The Italian Legend*, p. 298.

the VC. What follows omits the creation of the alphabet altogether and the subsequent dispute with the Latins.[18]

The complete absence of the overwhelming body of argumentative materials and the totality of Cyril's threefold education is important, precisely because a very different Cyril emerges from the pages of the *Italian Legend*. This Latin-Constantine-Cyril is a philosopher too, but one whose life is emplotted entirely around the translation of the relics of Clement, which is both his main achievement and his teleological purpose. The disputing missionary Cyril of the *VC*, therefore, appears very different from the Latin relic-translator. The *VC* also stands aside from the Latin tradition of missionary hagiography, which will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 6. Thus, although it was most probably written in Rome, the Cyril of the *VC* is formulated within and through ninth-century Byzantine intellectual discourse.

A Byzantine Argument

In what follows, the analysis moves away from the kind of contextualisation offered at the very beginning of Chapter 2, which focused exclusively on texts that are cited in the *VC*. Instead, I turn to the ideological positions and textual materials which, I argue, form the discursive milieu within which the text was composed, even though they are not explicitly cited by it. This discursive milieu is proposed and established through two kinds of contextualisation: contemporary hagiography and the so-called 'anti-Photian' corpus of texts. Once this has been proposed, this section will seek to locate the position of the *VC* within this field and offer some comments on the *type* of textual community most likely to have produced it.

In the first part of this section, I will focus on how the *VC* structures Cyril's sanctity by combining two types of Byzantine hagiographies: travelling ascetics and disputing patriarchs. Although plenty of work has pointed to specific hagiographic tropes within the *VC*, no study of the text has thus far sought to integrate its overall structure within contemporary ninth-century Byzantine hagiography.[19] This has permitted scholars to maintain that the text is in some sense unique in its Slavonic purpose, quite unlike Byzantine hagiographies which, in their least charitable reading, 'are nothing but a sequence of topical places, miracles, visions,

[18] Ibid., p. 299. Compare with: *VC*, 14.1–5.

[19] E.g. V. Vavřínek, 'Staroslověnské životy Konstantina a metodeje a panegiriky Rehore z Nazianzu', *Listy Filologicke*, 85 (1962), pp. 56–65; V. Vulchanov, 'The Conversion of the Saint: A Traditional Hagiographic Element in the Structure of the Life of Saint Constantine-Cyril', *Kirilo-Metodievski Studii*, 17 (2007), pp. 148–52; Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions amongst the Slavs, SS Constantine and Methodius* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1970), p. 54; M. van Esbroeck, 'Le substrat hagiographique de la mission khazare de Constantin-Cyrille', *Analecta Bollandiana*, 104 (1986), esp. pp. 347–8.

supernatural phenomena, and interventions, which are usually arranged behind one another without any concept or focus'.[20] After identifying this generic structure, I move to study a group of Byzantine texts of various genres, loosely under the umbrella of the 'anti-Photian dossier', which forms the discursive milieu within which the *VC* is best positioned. I show that the position on education and mission presented by the *VC* engages with stories circulated about the patriarch Photios, in both their positive and negative guises. Thus, the *VC* reveals a particular intellectual stance in ninth-century Byzantium not reducible to Photios, but rather indicative of a particular social stratum, a textual community subject to particular Constantinopolitan education, preoccupied not so much with internal strife and schism, but looking outward to the fringes of the Christian world.

Byzantine Hagiography in the Ninth Century and the *VC*

Both to acquire his learning and to use it in argument, Cyril travels great distances. His journeys start in Thessaloniki and move through to Constantinople, the Caliphate, Mount Olympus, the Crimea and Khazaria, Moravia, Venice, and Rome. These two phenomena, travel, and a concern with education and disputation, occur frequently enough in ninth-century Byzantine hagiography, but do not, to my knowledge, elsewhere occur together.

There is a significant body of ninth-century hagiography concerned with saints who travel, and many of them visit places also visited by Cyril. The *Life of Gregory of Dekapolis* (ca. 797–840/1) (*BHG* 711), written by Ignatios the Deacon at around 843, offers an account of his divinely inspired travels to Ephesus, Ainos, Christoupolis, Thessaloniki, Corinth, Sicily, Rome, Syracuse and, via Thessaloniki once again, to Constantinople and Mount Olympus.[21] The ninth-century *Life of Joseph the Hymnographer* (ca. 812/3–886) (*BHG* 944), Gregory's spiritual son, was written by Joseph's successor Theophanes and recounts that Joseph was born in Sicily, raised in the Peloponnese, fled to Thessaloniki, then went to Constantinople, was sent on a mission to Rome by Gregory, and was exiled in the Crimea.[22] The *Life of Euthymios the Younger* (ca. 823–98) (*BHG* 655) records that he was born in Galatia, but travelled a number of times between Athos, Mount Olympus, and

[20] 'nejsou ničím jiným než sledem topických míst, zázraků, vizí, nadpřirozených úkazů a zásahů, které jsou většinou bez nějaké koncepce a ideového zaměření seřazeny za sebou', Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, p. 65.

[21] Ignatios the Deacon, *The Life of Gregory of Dekapolis*, in *Ignatios Diakonos und die Vita des Hl. Gregorios Dekapolites*, ed. G. Makris (Stuttgart, 1997), pp. 56–152; C. Mango, 'On Re-reading the Life of St Gregory the Dekapolite', *Byzantina*, 13 (1985), p. 635.

[22] *The Life of Joseph the Hymnographer*, in *Sbornik grecheskikh i latinskikh pamiatnikov, kasaiushtikhsia Fotiia patriarkha*, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus (St Petersburg, 1901), pp. 1–14; D. Stiernon, 'La vie et l'œuvre de S. Joseph l'Hymnographe: A propos d'une publication récente', *Revue des études Byzantines*, 31 (1973), pp. 244–52.

Thessaloniki, and to the islands of Neoi and eventually Hera.[23] A shorter journey is recorded in the *Life of Peter Bishop of Argos* (ca. 850–920) (*BHG* 1504) who travels from Constantinople to the Peloponnese, Corinth, and eventually Argos.[24] Finally, Epiphanios' attempt to avoid communion with iconoclasts by following in the footsteps of the Apostle Andrew offers a journey around the Black Sea through Heraclea, Sinope, Trebizond, and Sebastopolis amongst others, before arriving in the Crimea.[25] It is not clear whether Epiphanios actually went to Kherson, but he does refer to its people as having 'wavered in their faith', perhaps a reference to iconoclasm.[26]

It seems, therefore, that Thessaloniki, Mount Olympus, Rome, and the Crimea, in particular, served as nodal points for the travelling holy man in the ninth century and—Peter, Bishop of Argos aside—this holy man was usually a monk or ascetic. Travel to the Arab world, on the other hand, especially Baghdad, served as a nodal point for Byzantine scholars of the same period.[27] The locations Cyril is represented as visiting alone demonstrate the fusion, in the *VC*, of ascetic Orthodox practice with Hellenic learning.

None of the aforementioned texts, however, pay particular attention to their saint's learning, or to any accounts of disputations of comparable length. In this, the *VC* stands apart. But it does find parallels in a number of Byzantine patriarchal saints' lives. The combination of these two hagiographical motifs (travelling ascetic and educated rhetor), frame the *VC*'s case for Hellenic and other outside knowledge, and its usefulness in missionary activity.

The paradigmatic example of an educated, disputing saint is found in the *Life of Patriarch Nikephoros* (ca. 750–825) (henceforth *VN*), written also by Ignatios the Deacon.[28] In the introduction to her translation of the text, E. Fisher describes Nikephoros as 'by no means the typical Byzantine holy man who attained sanctity by enduring great physical privations, performing notable miracles, or suffering painful martyrdom', but rather one whose 'feats of Christian achievement were

[23] *The Life of Euthymios the Younger*, in L. Petit, 'Vie et Office de Saint Euthyme le Jeune', *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien*, 8 (1903), pp. 168–205; *The Life of Euthymios the Younger*, trans. A.-M Talbot, in A.-M. Talbot and R. Greenfield, eds., *Holy Men of Mount Athos* (Washington, DC, 2016), pp. 1–165; D. Papachryssanthou, 'La Vie de saint Euthyme le Jeune et la métropole de Thessalonique à la fin du IXe et au début du Xe siècle', *Revue des études Byzantines*, 34 (1974), pp. 241–2.

[24] Theodore of Nicea, *The Life of Peter of Argos*, A. Kaldellis and I. Polemis, eds., trans., *Saints of Ninth and Tenth Century Greece* (Washington, DC, 2019), pp. 117–62. I am profoundly grateful to Professor Antony Kaldellis and the series editor Dr Alice Mary-Talbot for granting me access to proofs of this book prior to publication. A. Vasiliev, 'The "Life" of St. Peter of Argos and Its Historical Significance', *Traditio*, 5 (1947), pp. 163–90.

[25] For a full list of the places he visits, see: C. Mango, 'A Journey around the Coast of the Black Sea in the Ninth Century', *Palaeoslavica*, 10 (2002), pp. 255–64; *The Life of Apostle Andrew*, in *Grecheskie predaniia o apostole Andre*, vol. 1: *Zhitiia*, ed. A. Vinogradov (St Petersburg, 2005).

[26] Mango, 'A Journey', p. 263.

[27] Magdalino, 'The Road to Baghdad', pp. 195–213.

[28] Ignatios the Deacon, *The Life of Patriarch Nikephoros*, in *Nicephori archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani opuscula historica*, ed. C. de Boor (Leipzig, 1880); Ignatios the Deacon, 'The Life of Patriarch Nikephoros I of Constantinople', trans. E. A. Fisher, in A.-M. Talbot, ed., *Byzantine Defenders of Images* (Washington, DC, 1998), pp. 25–142.

intellectual' in nature.[29] This sounds rather familiar. So too does the defence of Hellenic learning in the text. The account of Nikephoros' education in rhetoric and philosophy is much more elaborate than what we find in the *VC*. But much like the *VC*, which draws its definition of philosophy from a logic textbook, the *VN*'s section on the education of Nikephoros copies over a page of text from a textbook on syllogisms.[30] Such learning once again needs to be justified:

> *πρὸς γὰρ τῇ τῶν θείων λογίων μελέτῃ καὶ τὴν τῆς θύραθεν [παιδείας] εἰσεποιήσατο μέθεξιν· τῇ μὲν τὸ ἐν διδαχαῖς καταπλουτίσαι θέλων πειθήνιον, τῇ δὲ τὸ τῆς πλάνης διελέγχειν ἀπίθανον*[31]
>
> and in addition to study of the divine scriptures, he also acquired familiarity with secular [rhetorical education] partly out of a desire to enhance the persuasive [quality] of his [own] teaching and partly out of a desire to expose the implausibility of [heretical] error[32]

This sentiment is shared in the *VC*: learning rhetorical arts, or 'outside knowledge' ('*τὴν τῆς θύραθεν <παιδείας>*') gives form and structure to pious content. The *VC* is never as eloquent nor as explicit in this matter. It shows rather than tells. But both *Lives* offer a staged rhetorical disputation. Nikephoros performs a dispute with the emperor at his court, against iconoclasm. The emperor convenes this, giving the following reason:

> *τοῖς οὖν περὶ τούτων διαμφιβάλλουσι πάσης ἄτερ ἀναβολῆς ὑμᾶς διαλεχθῆναι προτρέπομεν, καὶ πείσειν ἢ πεισθῆναι κεκρίκαμεν, ὡς ἂν καὶ ἡμεῖς τὰ δικαίως ἐγνωκότες λεγόμενα μετὰ τοῦ δικαίου γενοίμεθα καὶ τούτῳ τὴν ῥοπὴν χαρισαίμεθα*[33]
>
> therefore, we urge you to engage without any delay in discussion with those who have doubts concerning these matters, and we have decided that [you] shall convince [them] or be convinced [by them], so that we who have come to understand what is justly expressed might stand [together] with justice and weigh out our judgements in its favour[34]

The *VN's* dispute mirrors the Khazar Khagan's choice to convene Cyril and the Jewish and Muslim scholars at his court.[35] Both fundamentally believe that disputation is a reliable method of achieving a correct judgement on faith.[36]

[29] E. Fisher, 'Introduction' to Ignatios, *The Life of Patriarch Nikephoros*, in Talbot, ed., *Byzantine Defenders of Images*, pp. 25–142, at p. 34.

[30] See: O. Goncharko, D. N. Goncharko, 'A Byzantine Logician's "Image" within the Second Iconoclastic Controversy: Nikephoros of Constantinople', *Scrinium*, 13 (2017), pp. 291–308.

[31] Ignatios, *Life of Patriarch Nikephoros*, 149.5–8. [32] Ibid., trans. Fisher.

[33] Ibid., 170.9–12. [34] Ibid., trans. Fisher. [35] *VC*, 8.1–5.

[36] The Khazar Khagan explicitly says to the emperor that 'if [your messenger] refutes the Jews and Saracens, then we will receive your faith', 'да аще прѣприть евреѥ и срацины, то по вашѣ се вѣрѣ имемь', ibid., 8.5.

As noted above, the author of the *VC* lacks the eloquence and sophistication of Ignatios. The rendering of Cyril's short debate with the iconoclast patriarch shows no textual connection with that of Ignatios.[37] But in a sense this is even more useful, as it demonstrates the dissemination of such positions on Hellenic and other outside learning in the ninth century. Nikephoros and Cyril are not so much 'unusual' as they are consecutive. In a post-iconoclast Byzantine intellectual sphere, heretical beliefs and heathens were no longer debated with from within as in the *VN*. Iconoclasm and the patriarch John VII are quite marginal in the *VC*'s narrative. Rather, heathens had to be sought out from beyond the imperial borders. It is precisely due to the 'outside' nature of the peoples, therefore, that 'outside' education is even more essential. The travelling, disputing saint is the natural conclusion to the successful disputing saint at home.

The Anti-Photian Dossier and the Case against Education

The *VC*'s argument for the use of 'outside' education in missionary activity, which fuses these two types of Byzantine saints, is not made on the offensive. The text does not formulate a position against the ascetic, static, holy man educated only in scripture and contained within the cloisters of monastic life. Rather, as this chapter has demonstrated, the *VC* goes to some lengths to dissolve the tension between the so-called 'monkish ascetic' and 'Christian philosopher' of Ševčenko. However, it is clear that in ninth- and tenth-century Byzantium, there was a fully articulated position *against* the mixing of Hellenic education with Orthodox piety, and *for* ascetic monastic life.

This position was by no means new. Tension between outside knowledge and piety dates to the very beginnings of Christianity.[38] However in the ninth century this position emerged most clearly and in most extreme terms from the so-called 'anti-Photian' dossier, and it has been the reason for the supposition, in modern historiography, that monastic piety and classical learning are broadly incompatible.[39] This dossier is a collection of texts highlighting the controversy around the election of Photios as patriarch of Constantinople, a number of which were translated into Greek from Latin.[40] A number of texts in the dossier discuss education and piety, but these two positions are not simply formulated as abstract

[37] Compare: *VC*, 5.1–24, with Ignatios, *Life of Patriarch Nikephoros*, trans. Fisher, pp. 81–106.

[38] For the attempt to replace outside knowledge with divine simplicity to maintain social and religious order, see: R. Lim, *Public Disputation, Power, and Social Order in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA, 1995), esp. pp. 123–58.

[39] See the language of both: I. Ševčenko, 'The Definition of Philosophy', repr. in his *Byzantium and the Slavs in Letters and Culture* (Cambridge, MA, 1991), pp. 93–4; A. Kaldellis, 'Byzantine Philosophy Inside and Out: Orthodoxy and Dissidence in Counterpoint', in K. Ierodiakonou et al., eds., *The Many Faces of Byzantine Philosophy* (Athens, 2012), pp. 129–51.

[40] The full list and the manuscripts that bear them can be found in: F. Montinaro, 'Introduction', in trans. R. Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 869–70* (Liverpool, 2022), pp. 64–5.

ideologies. They remain inseparable from the characters who embody them—namely, Patriarch Ignatios and Patriarch Photios—and the circumstances of their respective depositions from the patriarchal throne. Patriarch Ignatios, who was first enthroned in 847, clashed with regent Caesar Bardas and was deposed in 858. This resulted in Photios' snap elevation from a layman (and teacher of philosophy) to the highest ecclesiastical rank in just a week.[41] Ignatian supporters considered this uncanonical and appealed to the papacy, where they found a willing supporter in Pope Nicholas I, who was eager to assert the influence of the papacy in Constantinopolitan affairs.[42] In 866 Caesar Bardas was murdered, and in 867 so too was the emperor he was regent for, Michael III. The new emperor, Basil, immediately removed Photios from office and reinstated Ignatios in 867. A council followed in Constantinople in 869–70 which restored the unity of the two churches and condemned Photios.[43] After Ignatios' death in 877, however, Photios was once again rehabilitated and made patriarch, overseeing the dismissal of the council of 869–70. But Photios squeezed in one more deposition before his death, under the new emperor, Leo VI, who came to power in 886, removed Photios, and then put him on trial for treason. Sources disagree on whether this trial concluded with a conviction, but either way Photios died shortly after in 887.

The earliest texts in the dossier come from the 870 Council of Constantinople, clearly an abridgement of the complete acts as known to Anastasius and surviving in Latin. But the larger collection seems to have been compiled in the years following Photios' second deposition and death. Montinaro notes the year of the original collection was probably 893, but this was subsequently elaborated because a later copyist includes a quote from a letter from Pope John IX (898–9), bringing the final compilation to sometime in the early tenth century.[44]

In what follows, I will use a number of texts, which articulate the case against Photios most extensively, to draw out the two main characteristics of the anti-Photian position: firstly, the separation of an education in grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy into 'outside' knowledge, to be distinguished from scriptural learning; and secondly, the association of such knowledge with deception, the obscuring

[41] For a detailed narrative account of these events, see: L. Simeonova, *Diplomacy of the Letter and the Cross: Photios, Bulgaria, and the Papacy, 860s–880s* (Amsterdam, 1998); F. Dvornik, *The Photian Schism: History and Legend* (Cambridge, 1948).

[42] The objections of the Ignatians can be seen, for example, in the 'anti-Photian' synopses of the ecumenical councils: *The Synodicon Vetus*, eds., trans. J. Duffy and J. Parker (Washington, DC, 1979). For a discussion of the arguments used by Nicholas and their often-forged sources, see: E. Chrysos, 'Rome and Constantinople in Confrontation: The Quarrel over the Validity of Photius' Ordination', in D. Slootjes and M. Verhoeven, eds., *Byzantium in Dialogue with the Mediterranean: History and Heritage* (Leiden, 2019), pp. 24–46. For Photios' own defence, see his letter of 860 to Pope Nicholas I: Photios, *Letters*, 290, in B. Laourdas and L. G. Westerink, eds., *Photii patriarchae Constantinopolitani Epistulae et Amphilochia*, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1983), 290.1–140; pp. 123–38.

[43] The proceedings of the Fourth Council of Constantinople only survive in Latin fragments, and have recently been translated in full: *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 869–70*, trans. R. Price.

[44] Ibid., p. 65.

of signs, and access to inaccessible information which is either 'forged' or meaningless. I then position the argument of the *VC* against the two principal elements of the anti-Photian position.

The most explicit articulation of the case against 'outside' knowledge is found in the *Life of Patriarch Ignatios* (*BHG*, 817) (henceforth, *VI*), written by Niketas the Paphlagonian.[45] This is the first text in the dossier, and although there is some debate about its date of composition, Montinaro posits that it was probably written before 892 but compiled a little later, certainly by the early tenth century.[46] The text therefore marks the birth of the Photian and Ignatian parties and their textual articulation. As Martha Vinson notes, the *VI* presents Photios and Ignatios as two 'polarized and polarizing symbols of their age'.[47] Vinson insists that albeit rhetorically constructed, these two symbols are 'useful in revealing the issues and tensions that were perceived to be at the forefront of contemporary concern'.[48] That which separated Photios and Ignatios more than dynasty, religious experience, gender, or piety, 'was the issue of education'.[49]

It is useful to compare the description of the education of Photios and Ignatios with that of Cyril and Nikephoros. The 'synkrisis', or comparison between Photios and Ignatios, offers an irreconcilable binary between two sorts of knowledge:

> περιφανῶν σοφίᾳ τε κοσμικῇ καὶ συνέσει τῶν ἐν τῇ πολιτείᾳ στρεφομένων εὐδοκιμώτατος πάντων ἐνομίζετο. Γραμματικῆς μὲν γὰρ καὶ ποιήσεως ῥητορικῆς τε καὶ φιλοσοφίας ναὶ δὴ καὶ ἰατρικῆς καὶ πάσης ὀλίγου δεῖν ἐπιστήμης τῶν θύραθεν τοσοῦτον αὐτῷ τὸ περιὸν ὡς μὴ μόνον σχεδὸν φάναι τῶν κατὰ τὴν αὑτοῦ γενεὰν πάντων διενεγκεῖν, ἤδη δὲ καὶ πρὸς τοὺς παλαιοὺς αὐτὸν διαμιλλᾶσθαι.[50]
>
> [Photios] was considered to have the best reputation of anyone in worldly wisdom and political acumen. In fact, so great was his mastery of literary criticism ('grammatikē'), poetry, rhetoric, philosophy, even medicine, and almost every kind of knowledge in the secular realm ('epistēmēs tōn thyrathen') that he not only surpassed all his own generation, but, one might almost say, he even rivalled the ancients.[51]

In contrast with Photios' grammatical, rhetorical, and philosophical education, Ignatios has no knowledge of what Smithies translates as the 'secular realm' ('*ἐπιστήμης τῶν θύραθεν*'), but literally means knowledge of 'outside affairs', the very same 'outside' ('*θύραθεν*') which the *VN* defends:[52]

[45] Nicetas David, *The Life of Patriarch Ignatius*, ed., trans. A. Smithies (Washington, DC, 2013).
[46] Montinaro, 'Introduction', p. 67.
[47] M. Vinson, 'Rhetoric and Writing Strategies in the Ninth Century', in E. Jeffreys, ed., *Rhetoric in Byzantium* (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 9–22, at p. 11.
[48] Ibid. [49] Ibid. [50] Nicetas, *Life of Ignatius*, 21.30–5.
[51] Ibid., trans. Smithies. [52] Ignatios, *Life of Patriarch Nikephoros*, 149.5–8.

> ὁ καὶ Ἰγνάτιος οἷά τις εὐγενέστατος ὄρπηξ ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ τοῦ Θεοῦ φυτευθεὶς καὶ ἐν ταῖς αὐλαῖς τῆς μοναδικῆς πολιτείας ἐξηνθηκὼς […] καὶ πᾶσαν μὲν Παλαιὰν Διαθήκην, πᾶσαν δὲ Νέαν ἐκμελετῶν, πᾶσι δὲ λόγοις τῶν ἱερῶν Πατέρων φιλοπόνως ἐσχολακὼς καὶ τούτων τήν τε πρᾶξιν μιμούμενος καὶ τὴν θεωρίαν ἀναλεγόμενος[53]
>
> Ignatios like a noble sapling planted in the House of the Lord and brought to full bloom amid the cloisters of monastic life […] by closely studying the whole of both the Old and the New Testaments, by devoting himself zealously to all the writings of the Holy Fathers, imitating their actions and taking up their spiritual contemplations[54]

Ignatios comes to full bloom *inside* the cloisters, not engaging with 'outside knowledge'. Such knowledge, as represented by Photios' worldly wisdom ('*τῇ κοσμικῇ σοφίᾳ*') is definitively 'not in accordance with Christ's precepts'.[55] The absolute juxtaposition of the outside and inside occurs again, when Niketas reproaches Photios directly, asking if it was 'the Old and New Testament' or the 'advice of pagan sages' ('*αἱ τῶν ἔξωθεν σοφῶν γνῶμαι*'; literally, the opinions of wise men outside) that incited him to persecute Ignatios.[56]

This fully articulated position against 'outside' education in clear opposition to scriptural learning also reveals the second major attribute associated with learned rhetors: that those with 'outside' knowledge use this knowledge to obscure rather than to reveal truth. The assumption exposed is that there is no hidden Christian truth to be revealed through grammatical or rhetorical education. The *VI* notes that Theophanes, later bishop of Caesarea, deposited a forged book in the imperial library and then showed it to the emperor, Basil. He insisted that 'no-one other than Photios could decipher this book' ('*οὐδ' ἄλλος τις, φησίν, ἀνθρώπων ἢ Φώτιος τοῦτο διαγνῶναι δύναιτ' ἄν*').[57] The emperor calls on Photios, who in turn reveals its secrets, and their friendship is resumed henceforth.

This story reveals the belief, in Middle Byzantium, that access to particular kinds of 'outside' education can give access to obscured information, which is hard to access as a result of being in another language or using non-linguistic symbols. But the *VI* seeks to challenge this common-sense or cultural norm: the book was forged, and all knowledge learned men like Photios claim to reveal is fraudulent. 'Outside' knowledge does not and cannot reveal any new truth.

The same distinction between inside and out, and association between outside knowledge and deception is evident in the ninth century. In his letter to Pope

[53] Nicetas, *Life of Ignatius*, 9.7–16. [54] Ibid., trans. Smithies. [55] Ibid., 21.34.
[56] Ibid., 48.9. Inside and outside knowledge as categories recur in Byzantine disputes about philosophy. See, for instance, the letters of Psellos: A. Kaldellis and I. Polemis, *Psellos and the Patriarchs: Letters and Funeral Orations for Keroullarios, Leichoudes, and Xiphilinos* (South Bend, IN, 2015).
[57] Nicetas, *Life of Ignatius*, 90.9–10.

Hadrian II, dated to 869/70, concerned with the proceedings of the council at Constantinople, Anastasius the Librarian offers a fascinating story about the recently anathematised Photios and Constantine-Cyril.[58] The story, which he must have heard in Constantinople, clearly emerges from the temporarily victorious anti-Photian milieu. Anastasius notes that Photios is said to be teaching his students that man has two souls.[59] Once again, outside knowledge is used to mislead and misinform. He is asked why he would do such a thing by none other than Constantine-Cyril, a 'man of great sanctity and a strong friend of his' ('magnae sanctitatis viro fortissimo eius amico').[60] Photios' response is as follows:

> Non studio quenquam laedendi talia' inquit 'dicta proposui, sed probandi, quid patriarcha Ignatius ageret, si suo tempore quaelibet heresis per syllogismos philosophorum exorta patesceret, qui scilicet viros exterioris sapientiae reppulisset.[61]
>
> I didn't propose such things with the desire to hurt someone', he said 'but to test what patriarch Ignatios would do, if in his time some heresy would arise and circulate from the syllogisms of the philosophers, the very man who undoubtedly pushed away the men of exterior wisdom.

The purpose of Photios' misinformation, or dangerous obscuring of the truth, is petty and personal: to challenge Ignatios. This challenge relies on the same distinctions made in the *VI*, between 'outside knowledge' and Photios, on the one hand, and Ignatios, as its antithesis or the one who 'pushed away the men of exterior wisdom' on the other. The phrase 'exterior wisdom' ('exterioris sapientiae') clearly comes directly from the kinds of phrases we see in the *VI*: 'worldly wisdom' ('*τῇ κοσμικῇ σοφίᾳ*') or 'outside knowledge' ('*ἐπιστήμης τῶν θύραθεν*'). The story in Athanasius' letter concludes with Cyril reproaching Photios for his greed and jealousy.[62]

The purpose of this tale in Anastasius' letter is clearly to distance Cyril, presumably already buried in Rome at the time of writing, from the denounced patriarch and thus secure the legitimacy of the relics he brought to Rome. But what the letter reveals is the striking consistency of the discourse concerning Photios which was circulating in Constantinople and Rome in the ninth to tenth centuries, and within this discourse, of the ideological positions on education and the attributes associated with 'outside' knowledge. This consistency is further illuminated by the appearance of the same accusation that Photios was preaching that man has two souls, found in the *Chronographia* of Pseudo-Symeon, a tenth-century chronicle which, although it does not fall in the

[58] Anastasius the Librarian, *Letters*, 5, pp. 407–15.
[59] 'Photios duarum unumquenque hominem animarum consistere praedicabat', ibid., p. 407.
[60] Ibid. [61] Ibid. [62] Ibid.

manuscripts of the anti-Photian dossier directly, clearly incorporates a late ninth-century anti-Photian text within its narrative:[63]

> *Ἐν μιᾷ νυκτὶ συνέβη γενέσθαι σεισμοὶ μεγάλοι· καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ Φώτιος ἀναβὰς ἐπὶ τοῦ ἄμβωνος δημηγορῆσαι εἶπεν ὅτι οἱ σεισμοὶ οὐκ ἐκ πλήθους ἁμαρτιῶν ἀλλ' ἐκ πλησμονῆς ὕδατος γίνονται, καὶ ἕκαστος ἄνθρωπος δύο ψυχὰς ἔχει, καὶ ἡ μὲν μία ἁμαρτάνει, ἡ δὲ ἑτέρα οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει*[64]
>
> And in one night there came to be great earthquakes, and this Photios went up onto the ambo to preach, and said that the earthquakes were not due to the multitudes of [our] sins, but that they had happened because of the overaccumulation of water, and that each man has two souls, one which sins, and the other which does not.

The story told here differs in its specifics from that of Anastasius, making clear that Anastasius' insertion of Cyril to try to distance him from Photios was probably original. This reframed story about an earthquake reveals the same basic tenets, however. Outside knowledge is once again placed in opposition to divine revelation. Photios offers a scientific explanation of an earthquake, rather than a theological one. The number of souls is only a secondary concern here. And rather than Cyril, it is the emperor himself who calls Photios to reproach him:

> *καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς γελάσας εἶπεν 'οὕτως δογματίζει ὁ Χαζαροπρόσωπος;' προσκαλεῖται οὖν εὐθὺς τον πατριάρχην, καὶ πυνθάνεται ὡς δῆθεν θυμούμενος 'οὕτως δογματίζεις, ὦ μαρζούκα, δύο τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἔχειν ψυχάς;'*[65]
>
> And the emperor, having laughed said: 'Is it thus that the Khazar-face preaches?', and he immediately called upon the patriarch and asked him, since he was truly angry: 'Is it thus that you preach, o "marzouka", that man has two souls?'

Rather than an assault on Ignatios, as in Anastasius' letter, Photios' justification for this preaching is pure distraction and deception. He 'treacherously' persuades Michael III that he was 'speaking about other matters, and not thus'.[66] Like Emperor Basil with the forged book in the *VI*, Michael seems temporarily persuaded. But then the previously unintroduced Gregory, bishop of Syracuse, asks 'that man' ('*τούτῳ*') what the word 'marzouka' means.

Scholarship has taken the man who is asked and who answers the question with a bizarre etymology of the word 'marzouka' to be the emperor, Michael.[67]

[63] 'Pseudo-Symeon Magistros', in A. Kazhdan, ed., *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (Oxford, 1991).
[64] Pseudo-Symeon Magister, *Chronicle*, in *Theophanes Continuatus, Ioannes Cameniata, Symeon Magister, Georgius Monachus*, ed. I. Bekker (Bonn, 1838), 673.9–13.
[65] Ibid., 673.18–22.
[66] '*δολερῶς*', '*ὡς περὶ ἄλλων ὑποθέσεων εἰπεῖν, οὐχὶ δὲ οὕτως*', ibid., 673–4.1–2.
[67] J. Shepard, 'Photios' Sermons on the Rus Attack of 860: The Questions of His Origins and of the Route of the Rus', in A. Beihammer, B. Krönung, and C. Ludwig, eds., *Prosopon Rhomaikon Ergänzende*

But in the context of the anti-Photian materials discussed here, and in particular their preoccupation with deciphering the obscure, I argue 'that man' ('*τούτῳ*') to whom the question is asked is Photios. The question is a challenge, to Photios, to decipher a foreign word by attempting to understand its etymology. The grammar also permits this.

In the text, the emperor first asks Photios whether he truly preaches that man has two souls. The patriarch's treacherous response opens with a grammatical change of subject clearly indicated with a 'but he' ('*ὁ δὲ*'). It is immediately after the patriarch's response that the following text occurs:

> *τούτῳ Γρηγόριος ὁ Συρακούσης ἠρώτησε 'τί τὸ μαρζούκας σημαίνει;' ὁ δὲ εἶπεν 'τὸ μάρ κύων, τὸ ζού σῦρε, τὸ κάς κάσσυμα· τουτέστι κύων ἕλκων δέρμα.'*[68]
>
> Gregory of Syracuse asked this man: 'What does "marzoukas" mean?', and he replied 'The "mar" [means] dog, the "zou" [means] skin and the "kas" [means] dragging, therefore this is: a dog dragging [its] skin'.

It seems most likely that the 'and he' ('*ὁ δὲ*') of this question is the very same 'and he' ('*ὁ δὲ*') who answered the previous question, namely Photios. Given that this is an interrogation of Photios for his unorthodox beliefs, a dialogue of clarification between the two interrogators seems unnecessary. Rather, in what is clearly meant to be a humorous encounter, the joke is on Photios for trying to decipher a clearly foreign word through Greek etymological parts. It may be that the encounter was recorded more for the purpose of entertainment than rigorous commentary but, to my mind, choosing to record this alongside the story about Photios' false preaching, from a clearly anti-Photian document, makes it most probable that there is method in this madness: that this encounter reveals something more significant about Byzantine ideas about education and Photios.

The *VI* made the point that 'outside knowledge' cannot reveal truth by stressing that the book which Photios deciphered for the emperor was forged. In this tale, the same point is stressed by challenging Photios to decipher something which is actually not decipherable with his grammatical skills. The etymology Photios derives is embarrassing. The phrase which roughly translates to a 'dog dragging its skin' may have sexual connotations, as one of the specific meanings of '*κύων*' is foreskin, or it may allude to an ancient proverb, literally 'to skin a skinned dog' ('*κύνα δέρειν δεδαρμένην*'), meaning 'to flog a dead horse'.[69]

The actual word 'marzoukas' is elsewhere unattested in Greek, and Jonathan Shepard has suggested it is a personal name that has connotations of foreign-ness,

Studien zur Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit (Berlin, 2017), pp. 111–28, at pp. 113–14; J. Gouillard, 'Le Photios du Pseudo-Syméon magistros: Les sous-entendus d'un pamphlet', *Revue des études sud-est européennes*, 9 (1971), pp. 398–9.

[68] Pseudo-Symeon, *Chronicle*, 674.2–4.

[69] I am grateful to Professor Marc Lauxtermann for this suggestion. His proposed translation for the phrase was 'flogging the dolphin'.

and particularly with the people of the Eurasian steppe.[70] As such, its purpose is to stress the other-ness implied by 'Khazar-face', which may be a comment on Photios' family background.[71] However, if as I propose, the purpose of asking Photios the meaning of the word is to demonstrate that his knowledge and etymological deductions have no value, then it may be the case that the word itself does have real meaning which is intentionally being obscured.

It is unsurprising therefore that the word 'marzoukas' does very closely resemble an actual word in Arabic, derived from the verb 'razaqa' ('رزق') meaning to provide someone with the means of subsistence or spiritual possessions, an act often associated with God.[72] The noun, 'marzūq' ('مرزوق') is the passive participle form of 'razaqa' and means someone 'blessed (by God), fortunate, prosperous or successful'.[73] The emperor is othering Photios, by calling him blessed in a language associated with a competing religion and polity. More specifically, it may be an attempt to associate Photios' heretical teaching with his interaction with non-Christian peoples, by using an Arabic word, and thus perhaps alluding to Photios' embassy to the Middle East.[74] But even if the real meaning of the word was not necessarily known to Byzantine readers, the text makes clear that Photios, using his training in 'outside knowledge', can only deduce nonsense from a symbol endowed with real meaning.

In short, a position against 'outside knowledge' can be solidified across a range of texts and cannot be separated from the figures of Photios and Ignatios. This position has two major attributes, the first being the incompatibility and distinctness of 'outside knowledge' and of scriptural learning. The second is the association of 'outside knowledge' with deception and obfuscation, and therefore the belief that such knowledge cannot reveal any meaningful hidden truth. A third and smaller point, only evident in Pseudo-Symeon, is the potential connection between distorted dogma and the Caucasus (as the emperor calls Photios 'Khazar-face') and the Caliphate (given the Arabic source for 'marzoukas'). The implication is that contact with foreign peoples can lead to using one's knowledge to mislead. The attributes of this position have clear consequences for missionary activity. Focusing on learning within the cloisters of the monastery eliminates the possibility of looking outwards. As Cyril Mango has noted, the *VI*, the most elaborate articulation of this position, has very little to say about Ignatios' actual achievements—there is no iconoclast that Ignatios persuades, as Nikephoros does, and no pagan or heathen that he converts.[75] Thus, suspicion hangs over both 'outside knowledge' and outside peoples.

[70] Shepard, 'Photios' Sermons', pp. 113–14. [71] Ibid., p. 115.

[72] J. Cowan and H. Wehr, eds., *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* (Urbana, 1994), p. 336. I am grateful to Dr Phil Booth for pointing me in this direction.

[73] Ibid., p. 337.

[74] Mentioned in the preface of the Bibliotheca, see: N. Wilson, *Photios: The Bibliotheca* (Bristol, 2013), pp. 25–6.

[75] C. Mango, 'The Liquidation of Iconoclasm and the Patriarch Photios', in A. Bryer and J. Herrin, eds., *Iconoclasm* (Aldershot, 1977), pp. 133–40, at p. 139.

This is the debate in ninth-century Byzantine discourse with which the *VC* engages. It does so neither by attacking asceticism nor by an outright defence of Hellenism. Rather it does so by seeking to reinterpret the categories of analysis.

First and foremost, as I have argued throughout, the *VC* much like the *VN* does not accept the charge that 'outside knowledge' is incompatible with the learning of a monastic ascetic. The representation of Cyril's education ensures that divine revelation and scriptural study go hand in hand with the uses of grammatical education. In the *VC*, 'outside knowledge' is used to organise and structure scriptural knowledge, and to deduce Christian truths, logically, from Old Testament.

Secondly, the *VC* also engages with the idea of inaccessible knowledge, which requires specific skills in order to be deciphered. The statement in the *VI* that 'no-one other than Photios could decipher this book' is echoed by the *VC*'s encounter between Cyril and the Chalice of Solomon, 'which [letters on the chalice], no one was able to read or understand'.[76] Cyril deciphers this chalice text because, the *VC* claims, it was in Hebrew and Samaritan letters. As noted above, in reality the chalice text was clearly already circulating in Greek.[77] This insistence on Hebrew and Samaritan is an original addition by the *VC* to refer back to Cyril's acts of learning. As discussed above, Cyril acquired the ability to read Hebrew and Samaritan books through the harmony between grammatical education and divine intervention. Thanks to this harmony, Cyril was able to decipher the chalice. Rather than a forged text, or a misdirected etymology, the information concealed in Hebrew and Samaritan is a 'prophecy about Christ' ('се ѥсть пророчьство о Христѣ'), described by Ševčenko as a 'cramming of all the main events in Christ's life into a slightly enlarged text of the inscription'.[78]

The story of the chalice does not simply stand as 'proof of Constantine's superior intellectual powers' therefore.[79] The case it is making is more subtle. What it suggests, rather, is that there are legitimate, orthodox truths which lay obscured and inaccessible to those without the appropriate education to decipher them. Where the case against outside education showed Photios unable to deduce the meaning of the word 'marzoukas' through Greek etymology, the *VC* shows to the contrary that Cyril is able to use the eight parts of Greek grammar and to compare vowels and consonants, to attain understanding of Hebrew and Samaritan books. From this, he is then able to decipher a prophecy about Christ.

Thirdly, the *VC* somewhat rehabilitates the Crimea and the Caucasus. Cyril successfully converts all those who threaten to attack him, including the local Khazar leader ('voivoda'), and the group of Hungarians. He corrects the faith of

[76] 'ихъ'же не можаше никтоже ни проүисти ни сказати', *VC*, 13.3.

[77] Ibid.; Ševčenko, 'The Greek Source of the Inscription on Solomon's Chalice in the Vita Constantini', in *To Honor Roman Jakobson on his Seventieth Birthday, 11 October 1966* (Paris, 1976), p. 1812.

[78] *VC*, 13.10; Ševčenko, 'The Greek Source of the Inscription', p. 1815.

[79] Ševčenko, 'The Greek Source of the Inscription', p. 1816.

those who have gone astray, like the Ful tribe. He discovers holy relics, performs two miracles and secures the promise of conversion from the ruler of the Khazars.

The Crimea and the Caucasus are lands of biblical peoples and miracles rather than exile, and lands of possibility rather than heresy. This was already possible in Byzantine discourse. In the *Life of Stephen the Younger* (early ninth century), the author seeks to legitimise the return of iconophile exiles to Constantinople, by representing outposts of exile, including Kherson, as strongholds of orthodoxy during the conflict.[80] But rather than engaging with iconoclasm, or simply accepting the unorthodox connotations of a region, as found in Pseudo-Symeon, the *VC* argues for possibilities in the Crimea and the Caucasus through missionary activity.

In short, whilst it is possible to trace the outlines of the anti-Photian position in the *VC*, it is clear that the premises which form this position are reinterpreted in the text. Learning and its relationship to piety was contested and malleable, not reducible to two binary Photian and anti-Photian intellectual positions. The flexibility of 'outside learning' as a symbol, shown in the *VC*, can also be glimpsed in some of the lesser hagiographies of the ninth century, which are not explicitly engaged with the Photian schism.

The *Life of Joseph the Hymnographer*, which recalls the saint's exile to the Crimea under Bardas (and therefore probably due to his Ignatian sympathies), recalls the transition between patriarchs as follows:

> *Ἰγνατίου δηλαδή τοῦ θείου ἀρχιερέως ὁσιως πατριαρχοῦντος καὶ τὸν θρονόν τῆς βασιλιδος μεγαλοπόλεως εὐσεβῶς οἰακίζοντος. οὗ μετὰ τὴν πρὸς κύριον ἐκδημίαν καὶ Φώτιος ὁ ἀείμνηστος πατριάρχης, τὸ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ἀναδεδεγμένος πηδάλιον, τὸν αὐτὸν μακαρίτην Ἰωσὴφ ἐστεργέ τε καὶ ἐξεθείαζε καὶ τῶν ἐκείνου καλῶν ἐπαινέτης καθίστατο τῶν ἄλλων ὑψηλότερόν τε εἶναι καὶ ὑπερκείμενον · ὃς τῷ σοφῷ πλουτῶν τὴν ἁγιότητα καὶ ἀρετὴν ᾔδη κρίνειν ὀρθότατα καὶ βίον δοκιμάζειν ὑπέρ ἅπαντας ἀσφαλέστερον*[81]
>
> When, indeed, Ignatios the divine arch-priest held the patriarch's office in a godly manner and adorned piously the [patriarchal] throne of the great imperial city, and after Ignatios' departure to the Lord, Photios, too, the patriarch of eternal memory, when he was elected to the helm of the church, both felt much affection for the same Joseph of blessed memory, and extolled him, and became the proclaimer of Joseph's virtues, and [regarded him] as both higher than the

[80] N. Evans, *Mountains, Steppes and Empires: Approaches to the North Caucasus in the Early Middle Ages* (DPhil Thesis, University of Oxford, 2016), p. 185; Stephen the Deacon, *The Life of Stephen the Younger*, *La vie d'Étienne le Jeune par Étienne le Diacre* (Aldershot, 1997) ed., trans. M.-F. Auzépy, pp. 85–276; M.-F. Auzépy, L'Hagiographie et l'iconoclasme byzantine: Le cas de la Vie d'Étienne le Jeune (Birmingham, 1999), p. 125.

[81] *Life of Joseph the Hymnographer*, pp. 10–11, 12.25–33.

> others and above the rest. [Photios] being rich in wisdom, knew [how] to judge holiness and virtue most accurately and how to assess one's way of life more reliably than anybody else.

Within their positive epithets, one still finds glimpses of the differences that the anti-Photian dossier makes so extreme. Ignatios holds the patriarchal throne in a 'holy' ('*ὁσιως*') and 'pious' ('*εὐσεβῶς*') manner, whilst Photios is rich in 'wisdom' ('*τῷ σοφῷ πλουτῶν*'). These qualities could easily, as in the *VI*, be portrayed as contradictory or competing, by simply specifying whether Photios' wisdom was 'worldly' and 'outside' or not. Rather than specify this, the text discusses his ability to 'judge' ('*κρίνειν*') both 'holiness' ('*τὴν ἁγιότητα*') and 'virtue' ('*ἀρετὴν*'), both piety and the more loosely classical concept of virtue, or valour. When wisdom is undefined, therefore, no contradiction or competition emerges between Ignatios and Photios, or their educational positions. And so it was perfectly possible for authors to refuse to engage with the extreme terms of the anti-Photian case, both here and in the *VC*.

The same flexibility is seen in the *Life of Euthymios the Younger*, which also recounts the resignation of Ignatios in passing. The author acknowledges that Ignatios, struggled with a 'terrible sedition by those ruling the empire at the time' ('*ταύτης ἰθύνας τοὺς οἴακας καὶ δεινῶς ὑπὸ τῶν τότε δυναστευόντων τῇ βασιλείᾳ σκεναζόμενος*'), and that he stepped down 'partly voluntarily and partly coerced' ('*τὸ μὲν ἑκών, τὸ δὲ βιαζόμενος*').[82] But there is no attack on Ignatios himself, nor on Photios who is once again subtly commended for his intellect:

> *Φώτιος γὰρ ἦν ὁ μακάριος, ὁ φωτὸς ἀκτῖσι φερωνύμως τοῦ ὀνόματος πλήθει διδασκαλιῶν καταλάμψας τὰ πέρατα*[83]
>
> That was namely the blessed Photios: the man who illuminated the ends [of the world] with rays of light, after the meaning of his name, by the multitude of his teachings

Once again, Photios' multitude of teachings ('*πλήθει διδασκαλιῶν*') are not defined as either 'outside' or inside. Thus conflict or tension is avoided. The passage also reveals an association between Photios and 'the ends [of the world]' ('*τὰ πέρατα*'). This may well be the very same association we find inverted in Pseudo-Symeon, where he is derided for his associations with the Khazar lands, and it is certainly an idea pertinent to the *VC*, preoccupied as it is with the spreading of Christian argumentation to the Caucasus, Middle East, and Latin West.

[82] *Life of Euthymios the Younger*, 12.18–19, 22. [83] Ibid., 12.31–2.

The component parts of the anti-Photian position were clearly available in the discursive milieu of ninth-century hagiography. But it is by no means obvious that the anti-Photian position was hegemonic or, in fact, that the schism between Photios and Ignatios was something that involved the whole Byzantine church and intellectual sphere. That much is clear from the fact we have hagiographies which chose not to engage with the schism or mention it. But the same is suggested by the unprecedentedly low attendance of the council which anathematised Photios in 869/70. The total figure of attendees was 102 (compare this with a council held in 879 also under Photios which gathered 383). But at the first two sessions, there were only twelve bishops present. Low figures are recorded in the Ignation sessions of the 861 Council as well, which has led Montinaro to suggest that 'there was no large backing of [Photios'] condemnation' in the Byzantine clergy, and more generally, that many bishops were reluctant to take part in any sort of gathering which put patriarchs on trial.[84]

Thus, perhaps the *Life of Joseph* and the *Life of Efthymios the Younger* are representative of the silent majority of the Byzantine church who simply chose not to engage with the patriarchal schism. The *VC* goes a little further, however, by choosing not simply to avoid the questions of education and piety but to tackle them. In doing so, it both makes evident the possibility of acquiring 'outside' knowledge in a pious manner, and of using this outside knowledge to pious ends, whether deciphering a prophecy about Christ or syllogistically structuring an argument about the Old Testament to embarrass Jewish scholars. The act of formulating this is a challenge to the anti-Photian position which creates an 'outside–inside' boundary and asserts that 'outside' knowledge cannot decipher or deduce meaning, without forgery or deception. Yet, this challenge is formulated neither through hostile polemic nor through the persons of Ignatios and Photios. And it goes further than just asserting the utility of 'outside' knowledge to Christian understanding. Rather it stresses the significance of action, namely missionary activity, or converting 'outside' peoples. This pragmatic objective perhaps explains the decision not to engage with inter-patriarchal conflict, and only to mention Photios in passing as a teacher.

Conclusions

I argue that the portrayal of Cyril in the *VC* as a 'third-way' candidate, through his carefully crafted learning and education, points to a textual community that was aware of, and engaged with the intellectual debates of the Constantinopolitan court but reluctant to engage in internal, personal conflict. To this outwards-looking

[84] F. Montinaro, 'Introduction', p. 43.

intellectual sphere of classically educated, but clearly self-identifying pious Christians, writing most probably in Rome, and not at the centre of Constantinopolitan intrigue, interpersonal defamation likely seemed futile. A broader worldview saw more pressing the matters of Abbasid intellectual competition, and the failure of the conversion of the Khazars signalled in the text. The *VC* is therefore very much an elite text, authored by a person or group with access to the highest levels of Byzantine education, intended for an audience with at the very least some such education, and engaging with an intellectual problem, pertaining to the most hegemonic spaces of Byzantine intellectual activity, namely the Constantinopolitan centre. But it is also a text that is interested in looking outwards, to Rome and its dignitaries mentioned in the text—Gauderic, Anastasius, and Pope Hadrian—and to the ends of the known world, produced by a community that ultimately saw missionary activity as the ultimate goal of pious education. This points to the composition of the text as both somewhere close to and with access to Greek-language materials, but also somewhere far enough from court that that petty interpersonal scandal could be superseded by a broader, bigger perspective. The most likely space to my mind therefore is Rome, where Cyril died, not long after his death. Despite the limited evidence for Roman monasticism as compared with elsewhere in Italy, we do know that at the turn of the ninth century, six separate Greek monastic communities are listed in Rome.[85] It is probable these communities were several centuries old, and that like our author, they would be able to recall the title *bibliothecarus* whilst also remaining alert to the political and personal schisms at the Constantinopolitan court, at least insofar as they affected their relations with the papacy.

The content of the *VC*, as I have proposed it, appears somewhat at odds with the fact the text survives in Slavonic alone, and that there is no Greek-language evidence for a cult of Cyril. There is no entry in the Synaxarion, no surviving life, homily, or hymn. This points to some failure, some moment when the connection between this Byzantine milieu, in Rome, and later Moravia, severed links with the Byzantine intellectual sphere. The *VC* never made it back to Byzantium, even though everything about the text and its content suggests that it was intended to be in conversation with that cultural sphere. Instead, probably the same Byzantine clerical elite responsible for this text settled into a local Moravian diocese, and embroiled itself in local political problems. The *VC* was not fit for purpose in this context, and the legend of Constantine-Cyril was recast to cope with a new set of uniquely Central European, Latinate concerns. This reframing and profound reinvention of the alphabet and its purpose survives in the *Life of Methodios*. This is what I turn to next.

[85] See: M. Costambeys and C. Leyser, 'To be the Neighbour of St Stephen: Patronage, Martyr Cult and Roman Monasteries, c.600–c.900', in K. Cooper and J. Hillner, eds., *Religion, Dynasty, and Patronage in Early Christian Rome, 300–900* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 262–87, at pp. 271–2.

PART TWO

INSTITUTIONALISING SLAVONIC

4
The Myth of Cyril and Methodios Revisited

The *Life of Methodios* (henceforth, *VM*) has long stood in the shadow of that of his brother Cyril. While the thousand-year celebrations since the death of Cyril, which took place in 1869, saw a surge in scholarly publications, the same was not true for the thousand-year anniversary of Methodios' death in 1885.[1] It was not until the 1,100-year celebrations in 1985 that Methodios received his own symposium and set of scholarly publications.[2] Even so, publications concerning Methodios, as a historical figure, or the *VM,* as a text, rarely, if ever, engage with him or it separately from Cyril, or the *VC*. The reason for this has been the assumption, both scholarly and more popular common-sense, that the two brothers are in some sense a unit, with the same goal and the same purpose. As such they are always celebrated or commemorated together (see Figure 5, and also Figures 1–4). This purpose, albeit rarely explicitly formulated, is always assumed to be 'enlightening' the Slavs, or more specifically the mission to Moravia. As the preamble of the 1993 constitution of the then newly formed Republic of Slovakia notes: 'we the Slovakian people, bearing in mind the political and cultural legacy of our ancestors […] mindful of the spiritual bequest of Cyril and Methodius and by the historical legacy of Great Moravia […] have herewith and through our representatives, adopted this constitution'.[3] That Cyril and Methodios had one spiritual goal, and therefore have left one 'spiritual bequest', in enlightening the Slavs of Moravia, is intertwined with the very basis upon which the Slovakian people claim a right to national autonomy.

This common-sense which has materialised as a 'figure of memory', in the words of Halbwachs, is regularly reproduced in scholarship, which often refers to the two brothers' agency collectively.[4] To give but one example: 'the interest of Constantine and Methodius [in a mission to the Slavs] had its deep roots and

[1] I. Rušek, 'Vurkhu deloto na slavianskiiat purvouchitel Metodii', *Kirilo-Metodievi studii*, 17 (2007), pp. 6–19, at p. 13.

[2] For example, see the two-volume international symposium proceedings from Bulgaria: N. Shivarov et al., eds., *Mezhdunaroden simpozium 1100 godini ot blazhenata konchina na sv: Metodii*, 2 vols. (Sofia, 1989).

[3] 'Constitution of the Slovak Republic', https://www.prezident.sk/upload-files/46422.pdf (last accessed: September 2023). Also noted in: M. Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia (858–882): Papal Power and Political Reality* (Leiden, 2014), p. 3.

[4] For a discussion of both the meaning of common-sense and 'figures of memory' in this book, see the Introduction.

Inventing Slavonic: Cultures of Writing between Rome and Constantinople. Mirela Ivanova, Oxford University Press.
 DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780198891505.003.0005

Figure 5 Statue of Saints Cyril and Methodius before the nineteenth-century temple at Radhošť, Czech Republic. Pudelek/Wikipedia

accompanied Constantine and Methodius from their early childhood to death'.[5] Note 'the interest' in the singular. The two brothers' unity of purpose is also transferred by scholars onto the two texts, the *VC* and *VM*. In this process, information is often taken uncritically from one text to supplement the other. There is little engagement with the possibility that the two *vitae* may be trying to achieve or argue different things, and might therefore be omitting, including, or transforming textual content in accordance with their different purposes. Most commonly, scholars take the *VC* as the base narrative, and while they accept and include all 'new' information from the *VM* to supplement the *VC*, they often do not engage with all the ways in which the *VM* contradicts the vita of his brother.[6]

[5] S. Nikolova, 'The Moravian Mission: A Successful and an Unsuccessful Result of the Activity of Sts. Cyril and Methodius', in A. Tachiaos, ed., *Cyril and Methodius: Byzantium and the World of the Slavs* (Thessaloniki, 2015), pp. 58–75, at p. 62.

[6] Uses of these texts in this pick-and-mix way to write narrative history are plentiful. Here are just a few examples from major studies: A. V. Istrin, *1100 let slavianskoi azbuki* (Moscow, 1963; 3rd ed., Moscow, 2010), pp. 14–23, 27–36, etc.; B. Angelov, *Kiril i Metodii: slavianski i bulgarski prosvetiteli* (Sofia, 1977), p. 8; F. Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions among the Slavs: SS Constantine and Methodius* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1970), pp. 66, 102, 103–4, 107, etc.; F. Grivec, *Slovanska apostola Sv. Ciril in Metod* (Ljubljana, 1927), esp. pp. 39–40, 52–66. D. Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern*

The texts are considered so unified that P. Devos and P. Meyvaert proposed the hypothesis that there was in fact one text to begin with, which included the lives of both brothers, but that the followers of Methodios extracted the information about Methodios into a *vita* of his own.[7] Not much later in 1973, the Bulgarian Academy of Science's edition of the two texts chose to ascribe them both to one person, Clement of Ohrid, even though not a single manuscript attestation of the texts assigns either of them to Clement, and the two texts never occur in the same manuscript.[8] This authorial attribution is by no means accepted universally in modern scholarship, but it is symptomatic of some of the assumptions informing approaches to the texts.[9] The slightly more radical positions of Devos, Meyvaert, and the Bulgarian Academy, were balanced out in Boris Floria's 1988 review article of the field, which represents the broad scholarly consensus.[10] It too insists on unity, asserting that 'the author [of the *VM*] evidently, saw the monument he created [i.e. the *VM*] as an addition and continuation of the *VC*'.[11] In 2020, Thomas Lienhard reaffirmed this maxim, by asserting (incorrectly) that 'both the *VC* and *VM* largely reaffirm each other in their accounts of events, with no major chronological contradictions'.[12]

Starting from this assumption of unity, scholars have used these two texts in tandem rather than in contrast. Even formal recognition of the differences between the *VC* and *VM*, and therefore possibly between their authors, can be sidelined by this assumed, fundamental unity of purpose. Vladimir Vavřínek's close study of the two texts highlights some formal difference, and keeps the two lives in separate chapters, yet tacitly accepts the contradictory common-sense most succinctly summarised in the words of Henrik Birnbaum: the lives 'are very different indeed, while generally representing the same ideology'.[13] The reproduction of this idea,

Europe, 500–1453 (London, 1971), pp. 137, 142–3; I. Wood, *The Missionary Life: Saints and the Evangelisation of Europe 400–1050* (Harlow, 2001), pp. 174–5; A. Vlasto, *The Entry of the Slavs into Christendom: An Introduction to the Medieval History of the Slavs* (Cambridge, 1970), pp. 35–7; B. Floria, *Skazaniia o nachale slavianskoi pis'mennosti* (2nd ed., St Petersburg, 2000), p. 45.

[7] P. Meyvaert and P. Devos, 'Autour de Léon d'Ostie et de sa Translatio s. Clementis (Légende italique des ss. Cyrille et Méthode)', *Analecta Bollandiana*, 74 (1956), pp. 189–240, at pp. 202–5.

[8] O. Kliment, *Subrani Suchineniia*, eds., trans. B. Angelov, Kh. Kodov, vol. 3 (Sofia, 1973).

[9] For a summary of the arguments for and against Clement, as well as a list of scholars who believe Methodios to be the author of the *VC*, see: Floria, *Skazaniia*, pp. 82–4.

[10] Floria, *Skazaniia*, p. 87.

[11] 'автор, очевидно, рассматривал созданный им памятник как дополение и продолжение ЖК', ibid.

[12] Lienhard, 'The Life of Constantine, the Life of Methodios and the History of the Slavs in the Ninth Century: a Reassessment', *Early Medieval Europe*, 28 (2020), pp. 57–78, at p. 68.

[13] The *VC* is mostly mentioned in the chapter about the *VM* to highlight similarities, e.g.: V. Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy* (Prague, 1963), p. 86. This close consideration of the two texts, however, does not stop Vavřínek from conflating their narratives in his more recent work, like using the sequence of the Moravian mission as it is found in the *VC* (Moravia—Balaton—Rome), but inserting Methodios even though he is not mentioned in the *VC*. V. Vavřínek, 'The Puzzle of the Cyrillo-Methodian Mission', *Byzantinoslavica*, 75 (2017), pp. 70–98; H. Birnbaum, 'The Lives of SS Constantine-Cyril and Methodius: A Brief Reassessment', *Cyrillomethodianum*, 17–18 (1993–4), pp. 7–14, at p. 9.

that the texts are in line with each other, has persisted so strongly, that one begins to feel as though scholars stopped closely reading the texts a long time ago.

By contrast, it is far from clear that the contemporary and politicised image of Cyril and Methodios as an inseparable and coherent pair was as prevalent in medieval texts as it is today. Two types of evidence point towards caution. The first concerns the process of reception of Cyril and Methodios as individuals in the immediate aftermath of their deaths. There is a common assumption that the Roman church celebrated Cyril and Methodios together from as early as the late ninth century. The papal institution itself has contributed to this myth of undisturbed celebration. In 2020, celebrating forty years of the brothers as co-patron saints of Europe, Cardinal Kurt Koch issued a video statement saying that the brothers have been 'witnesses of undivided unity at its wellspring, and of the possibility of holding diversity together'.[14] In stark contrast to this undivided unity, the work of Krasimir Stanchev and Anna Vlaevska-Stancheva has demonstrated that:

> […] в действителност посмъртната съдба на двамамта братя е различна, в частност отношението към Методий не е в никакъв случай еднозначно, а обединяването им в една култова дойка, официално призната от Римската църква е сравително късен процес, започнал с едикта на чешкия крал и император на Свещената Римска импреия Карл IV от 21.11.1347 г. и получил силен тласък през втората половина на 19ти век.[15]

> […] in reality, the posthumous fate of the two brothers is different, partly as attitudes toward Methodios are not unambiguous, and their unification into one cultic pair, officially recognised by the Roman church, is a relatively late process, which began with the edict of the Czech king and emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Charles IV on 21.11.1347 and received a significant boost in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Cyril was recognised and celebrated in Rome primarily as the bearer of the relics of Pope Clement, as discussed in the previous chapter.[16] Methodios remains unrelated to this story in the textual record: he is not mentioned in the *VC* account of the relic discovery, nor in the *Italian Legend* or the letter of Anastasius the Librarian. The eleventh-century frescoes in San Clemente, Rome, which depict the translation of the relics, portray two eastern monks bringing them.

[14] Cardinal Kurt Koch, '40 years: Saints Cyril and Methodios Co-Patrons of Europe', 31 December 2020, https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2020–12/saints-cyril-methodius-patrons-europe-40-years-koch-message.html (last accessed, September 2023).

[15] K. Stanchev and A. Vlaevska-Stancheva, 'Ot Eretik do svetets: evoliutsiia na metodieviia obraz v zapadnata traditsiia', *Kirilo-Metodievi studii*, 17 (2007), pp. 687–701, at p. 687.

[16] See Chapter 1.

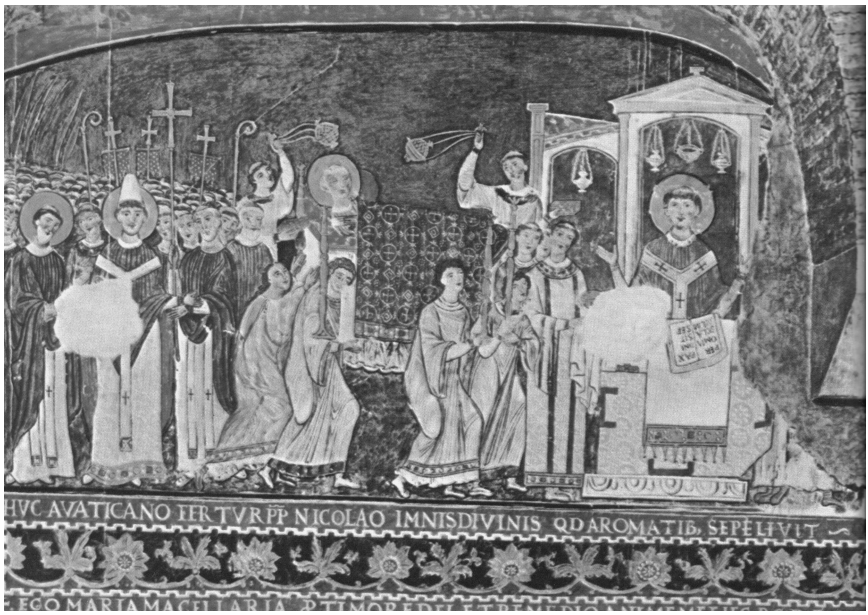

Figure 6 Fresco of Cyril delivering the relics of Pope St Clement

But they are unlabelled, and only one, clearly Cyril, has a halo (Figure 6).[17] The other, therefore, even if it is Methodios, which we cannot necessarily assume given the silence of the Latin records, was not considered a saint in eleventh-century Rome.[18]

To the contrary, the legacy of Methodios in the Frankish church was somewhat tainted. In the *Conversion of the Bavarians and the Carantanians* (henceforth *Conversio*), a late ninth-century text from the Archbishopric of Salzburg which will be discussed in more depth later in Chapter 6, Methodios is attributed with the promotion of the Slavonic alphabet alone, but it is no cause for celebration for the archbishopric claiming authority over the land.

> […] quidam Grecus Methodius nomine noviter inventis Sclavinis litteris linguam Latinam doctrinamque Romanam atque litteras auctorales Latinas philosophice superducens vilescere fecit cuncto populo ex parte missas et ewangelia ecclesiasticumque officium illorum, qui hoc Latine celebraverunt.[19]
>
> […] a certain Greek named Methodios with the newly discovered Slavonic letters, cunningly ('philosophice') bypassing the Latin language, the doctrine of

[17] For a discussion of the images see: L. E. Boyle, 'The Fate of the Remains of St Cyril', in L. Dempsey, ed., *San Clemente Miscellany II: Art & Archaeology* (Rome, 1978); C. Fillipini, 'The Image of the Titular Saint in the Eleventh-Century Frescoes in San Clemente, Rome', *Word & Image*, 22 (2006), pp. 245–50. The image of the fresco can be found on WikiCommons, 'San Clemente Fresco' (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:San_clemente_fresco.jpg) (last accessed: September 2023).

[18] Stanchev and Vlaevska-Stancheva, 'Ot Eretik do svetets', p. 690.

[19] *Conversio*, 12.

> the Roman church and the authoritative Latin letters, made worthless for the whole people of that area, in part, the masses, the gospels and the church services of those who had celebrated in Latin.

Later, as the relations between Byzantium and the West worsened, the records of the 1061 Synod of Split ratified by Pope Alexander II show that this dislike for Methodios in the Frankish realm spread to the papacy. Perhaps influenced by the 1054 schism between the Eastern and Western churches, Methodios was represented in much harsher terms than a 'certain Greek':[20]

> Dicebant enim, goticas litteras a quodam Methodio haretico fuisse repertas, qui multa contra catholice fidei normam in eadem sclavonica lingua mentiendo conscripsit, quoamobrem divino iudicio repentina dicitur morte fuisse damnatus[21]

> They [i.e. the prelates, bishops and pope] said that a certain heretic called Methodius had devised a Gothic alphabet [sic], and he perniciously wrote a great deal of falsehood against the teachings of the Catholic faith in that same Slavonic language. On account of this, he is said to have been condemned by divine judgement to a swift end.[22]

Thus, information about the two brothers was circulating separately in the two centuries after their deaths. As far as the textual traditions of remembrance in the Western church were concerned, the two are barely connected except inasmuch as Methodios is still associated with the Slavonic alphabet, even when Cyril is nowhere to be seen. Moreover, the ways in which the brothers were commemorated reveal different images and agendas: Cyril was a friendly diplomat who brought back the highly valued relics of a post-apostolic pope, while Methodios was a cunning bishop who used the Slavonic letters to impinge, initially on the Archbishopric of Salzburg's territory, and by the mid-eleventh century to undermine the very norms of the Catholic faith. Of course, the Latin church was not the only tradition to receive the legacies of the brothers, but it does demonstrate one way in which it is perfectly possible, and historically more reasonable to begin an inquiry with two separate figures and texts, rather than an inseparable pair.

The second point of caution against assuming this unity of purpose is to do with the evidence from the manuscript transmission of the two *vitae*. The transmission of the *VC*, as briefly noted in the previous chapter, is extremely complicated.

[20] The records of this council, which once again banned the use of Slavonic, only survive in summary, transmitted in a thirteenth-century history. Thomas of Split, archdeacon, *History of the Bishops of Salona and Split*, ed. O. Perić, trans. D. Karbić, M. M. Sokol, and J. R. Sweeney (Budapest, 2006), pp. 76–9.

[21] Ibid., p. 78. [22] Ibid., p. 79.

The earliest attested manuscript is as late as 1469.[23] Over forty-eight full copies of the text survive from eight groups of transmission traditions of both southern Slavonic and eastern Slavonic origins.[24] These have preoccupied Christiano Diddi for over a decade, in the preparation of a new critical edition.[25] The *VM* has a more straightforward textual history. The earliest manuscript is the twelfth-century so-called Uspenskii miscellanea.[26] Fourteen more are known, all dating to the late fifteenth century or later and all of east Slavonic redaction. The majority are from the *menologion* redacted by Makarii, the sixteenth-century Novgorod metropolitan, the so-called *Great Menaion Reader* ('Velikie Chet'i-Minei').[27] There are no South Slavonic manuscripts, but knowledge of Methodios is recorded there and therefore it is highly unlikely the *VM* was transmitted directly to Rus.[28] Nonetheless, the two texts did not circulate as a pair.[29] Even the corpus of *menologia* manuscripts points to this distance. Cyril was most often found in *menologia* under the month of February or October, whilst Methodios was found under April. For much of the transmission this meant notices about the brothers would be in physically different books, as *menologia* manuscripts often contain readings for only one month. This is the dominant kind of text in which the *VC* appears, with eleven attestations of the *VC* in October-only books, and six in April-only books.[30] But even multi-month *menologia* which feature the *VM* (five manuscripts as opposed to four in *menologia* for April alone) or the *VC* (three) never feature the two lives in one book.[31] In short, in early modern Muscovy, the two texts seem to have neither been read together, nor were the saints celebrated on the same day.

I do not mean to build an argument entirely on early modern manuscript transmission, nor on the reception of Cyril and Methodios in the Latin church. Rather, these discussions have sought to illustrate how the historical evidence bases concerning the two brothers are far more fragmented than modern historiography has acknowledged. In short, if the two lives have been received so differently,

[23] Kliment, *Subrani*, vol. 3, p. 34. [24] Forty-eight are listed in: ibid., pp. 34–45.

[25] For a more detailed study of each tradition, alongside critical editions of individual testimony groups, as mentioned in the last chapter, see C. Diddi, 'Materiali e ricerche per l'edizione critica di Vita Constantini. I–XI', *Richerche slavistiche*, 48 (2004–13), pp. 129–89.

[26] Kliment, *Subrani*, vol. 3, pp. 161–2. [27] Ibid.

[28] This will be discussed at length in the final part of this book in Chapters 8 and 9.

[29] The closest the two texts get to one another is the late seventeenth-century manuscript N.330 from *Undolski*, entirely devoted to texts about Cyril and Methodios, including the *VC* and the service to Cyril and Methodios, but not the *VM*. Kliment, *Subrani*, p. 43, n.42. Betti has also noted that the two texts never appear in one MS, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, p. 82.

[30] The *VC* in *menologia* for October: Kliment, *Subrani*, vol. 3, p. 35 nn. 3–4; p. 36 n. 6; p. 37 n. 10; p. 38 n. 16; p. 39 n. 22; p. 40 n. 27; p. 41 n. 28, n. 33; p. 42 n. 34, n. 36 (total: eleven). The *VC* under February ibid., p. 39 n. 17, n. 20, n. 23; p. 42 n. 37; p. 43, n. 41; p. 44 n. 44 (total: six). The *VM* in *menologia* for April: ibid., p. 165, n. 2, n. 4 (not April-only, but *VM* is under April 6th), n. 5; p. 166 n. 6, n. 7, n. 8 (as n. 4), n. 10 (as n. 4); p. 167 nn. 12–13 (as n. 4) (total: nine).

[31] The *VC* under February in multi-month *menologia*: Ibid., p. 35, n.18, n.38, n.40 (total: three). The *VM* under April in multi-month *menologia*: Ibid., p. 165, n.4, n.8, n.10, nn.12–13 (total: five).

is it also possible that they were formulated separately, and had different goals, specific to each text and its context? The present study therefore is not a study of *The Lives of Cyril and Methodios*, but explicitly a study of the *Life of Cyril* and the *Life of Methodios*, as two texts which present two very different saints, appealing to different modes of sanctity and to different legitimising authorities. It is not my purpose therefore to resolve the differences between these texts, which scholars have tended to attempt more or less explicitly, but rather to try to explain them.

In particular, the starting point of this study is one major discrepancy between the two *Lives*, which remains, to my knowledge, largely unaddressed even if it is occasionally acknowledged—that is, the general absence of Methodios from the *VC*, and more specifically his complete absence from the most crucial moment of the text for many scholars, namely the Moravian mission.[32] Methodios is mentioned only four times in the whole *VC*. The first mention is after Cyril's embassy to the Caliph's court, when he goes to Mount Olympus to find his brother, Methodios, there.[33] The second time is at the end of the Khazar debates, when the author notes that the debates in the *VC* are abbreviations of the full exchange, and that 'our teacher archbishop Methodios translated' the full texts, presumably into Slavonic.[34] This offers no information on whether Methodios was present at the mission, and to my mind, given that Methodios was not made bishop for a little while after Cyril's death, this is a later interpolation by the Slavonic translator of the *VC*. The third mention of Methodios is near the end of the Khazar mission. Cyril performs one of his only miracles in the text, making swamp water drinkable.[35] He then turns to 'his brother Methodios' and tells him to drink. This is the only indication Methodios is present for the whole seven pages. The final mention of Methodios is the very end of the *VC* after Cyril has died in Rome. Methodios appears rather swiftly. He has not been mentioned since the water miracle in the Crimea, and is entirely omitted from the Moravian mission. With no further explanation, however, he appears in Rome immediately after Cyril's death to ask the pope for his brother's body. Although he wishes to take Cyril back to a monastery in Byzantium, he settles to have him buried in the Basilica of St Clement.[36] Within the logic of the *VC*, it seems that the text is suggesting Methodios has come from Olympus to collect his body and take it to a designated 'brotherly'

[32] Note a rare mention of the absence of Methodios in the Venice debate: Floria, *Skazaniia*, p. 60. Likewise, Istrin acknowledges that Methodios may not have been on the Khazar mission although he does this not because of the brevity of the mention in the *VC*, but because he argues that Methodios was busy christening Boris of Bulgaria, conflating the Thessalonican missionary with a painter and monk called Methodios mentioned in the account of the conversion of Bulgaria in the chronicle of Theophanes Continuatus, Book IV. Istrin, *1100 Let*, p. 22. See: Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronicle I–IV*, in *Chronographiae Quae Theophanis Continuati Nomine Fertur Libri I–IV*, eds., trans. M. Featherstone and J. Signes Codoñer (Berlin, 2015), 14–15. More often than not, however, as noted above, scholars resolve this absence by simply using the *VM* to supplement the *VC*, for a longer list of examples, most of which deal with Moravia, see: p. 101, ft. 7.

[33] *VC*, 7.5. [34] Ibid., 10.96. [35] Ibid., 12.3. [36] Ibid., 18.16.

monastery.[37] If one were to read the *VC* alone, the 'spiritual heritage' of the brothers Cyril and Methodios appears deeply confusing.

By conflating the narratives of the *VC* and the *VM* into one story, scholars have sidelined the fact that the texts are at times directly contradictory. But in this conflation, it has also been the case that, in the words of Ian Wood in his seminal study of Western missionary hagiography, *The Missionary Life*, 'the purposes of our sources [have] been ignored in earlier, often pious, attempts to construct the Grand Narrative of Mission'.[38] If we understand the 'Mission' to be that of Cyril and Methodios rather than Boniface, Wood's statement provides a good summary of the bulk of the work done on the *VC* and *VM*, to date. Like Wood, I take it to be the case that the purposes of our sources 'could be best understood by considering the relationship between texts'.[39] In what follows, therefore, I offer a new reading of the *VM* and its purpose, which is finely attuned to the ways in which the *VM* departs from the *VC* and produces a new Cyril, and with him a new narrative of the invention of the Slavonic alphabet.

[37] Ibid. [38] Wood, *The Missionary Life*, p. xi. [39] Ibid.

5

Cyril, Slavonic, and the Pope in the *Life of Methodios*

This chapter offers a close textual reading of the *VM* and its relationship to the *VC*. The main premise of my argument is that teasing out the fundamental differences between these two texts can give us insight into the contested early history of the invention of the Slavonic alphabet.

The *VM* rewrites the *VC* not long after the death of Methodios. As discussed in Chapter 1, the texts were written in fairly close succession, the *VC* most probably sometime between ca. 869 and ca. 885 when Methodios dies, and the *VM* sometime in the last decades of the ninth century. The issues surrounding the legitimacy of Methodios and the Slavonic liturgy, which will be discussed in greater length below, point more specifically to the papacies of Stephen V (ca. 885–91) and Formosus (ca. 891–6), which oversaw the ban on Slavonic liturgy in 890, as the probable period of composition.[1]

In rewriting the story of the *VC*, the *VM* adds Methodios to both the missions to Khazaria and to the initial mission to Moravia. While scholarship has largely accepted Methodios' presence, what has remained unexplored is the nuanced ways in which the *VM* retells these stories, reframes their focus, and often even reorders their chronology. This study will seek to assess how Methodios' sanctity is formulated, and how and why information from the *VC* is used and reframed in the *VM* in the process. Why was Methodios inserted into a story to which he is otherwise rather peripheral? And what consequences does this have for the portrayal and defence of the Slavonic alphabet?

This chapter has three sections, which seek to establish what intervention the *VM* is trying to make through a close textual study of the life and its sources. I contend that the *VM* formulates a fundamentally different argument for Methodios' sanctity from that found in the *VC*. A large part of this difference comes from the sources of legitimacy to which the *vita* appeals, namely the pope and emperor. Although both figures are present in the *VC*, in the first part of this chapter I show how their significance is elevated in the *VM* through the insertion of a synopsis of the Ecumenical Councils in the opening of the text. This synopsis foregrounds institutionalised authority over and above individual intellect or disputation.

[1] Vavřínek takes the fact that the text does not mention the ban as evidence it was written prior to it: V. Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy Konstantina a Metoděje* (Prague, 1963), p. 85.

Inventing Slavonic: Cultures of Writing between Rome and Constantinople. Mirela Ivanova, Oxford University Press.
 DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780198891505.003.0006

Having dealt with the relationship between Methodios, the pope, and the emperor, I turn to the other two key relationships guiding the *VM*. The second part of this chapter focuses on Methodios and Cyril, and the *VM* inserts Methodios into the early life of Cyril to forge a brotherly bond ubiquitous in scholarship but absent from the *VC*. The third and final part focuses on Methodios' relationship with the Moravian Slavs. It demonstrates how the *VM* forges a special relationship between the newly formulated Cyrillo-Methodian pair and the Moravian Slavs, thus placing ethnicity at the heart of the mission.[2]

This textual argument is prefaced with a summary of the contents of the *VM*, to assist the reader. At roughly seven folia, or eight A4 pages, the *VM* opens with a two-page genealogy of the men of God, through the Old and New Testament, and this feeds into a summary of the ecumenical councils, which concludes with the introduction of Methodios.[3] A brief notice on the nobility of his parents follows, before Methodios is appointed by the emperor to an ambiguous Slavonic lordship ('kniazhenie').[4] A few years later, he leaves secular office for Mount Olympus.[5] The account is incredibly brief on this time too, so it is unclear how long he spends there. Next, and with his brother Cyril, he is sent to the Khazars since, as the text notes, there were Jews there blaspheming against the Christian faith.[6] Upon his return, the emperor offers him a bishopric, but instead he takes up life as a monk at the monastery of Polychron.[7] Immediately after this, Rastislav and Sviatopluk together as rulers of Moravia send word to Emperor Michael asking for teachers and Cyril and Methodios are sent to Moravia.[8] There, Pope Nicholas hears of them and invites them to Rome.[9] The text does not mention whether or not the pope has died, so it seems as if Nicholas welcomes them and refutes trilingualist heretics in Rome.[10] Then Cyril dies in Rome, and Kočel, the ruler of Pannonia, writes to the pope to ask for teachers.[11] This time the pope, now identified as Hadrian II specifically, obliges and sends Methodios with a papal letter to Kočel, Rastislav, and Sviatopluk, cited in full in the text.[12] Kočel immediately sends Methodios back asking that he be made bishop by the pope, 'which happened'.[13] Then local bishops moved by evil, turn on Methodios claiming his territory is theirs, and imprison him for two and a half years in Germany.[14] The pope hears of this and has him released, and Methodios performs three minor acts of prophesy, before the Frankish bishops challenge him again, but a papal letter (not in the text) is said to confirm Methodios' position once more.[15] Methodios is challenged by the same bishops who say the emperor is angry with him, so he travels to the emperor and back.[16] He then devotes himself to work, appointing scribes and priests and pursuing more translations, before he tames

[2] A precis of this final section was previously published as: M. Ivanova, 'Inventing and Ethnicising Slavonic in the Long Ninth Century', *Journal of Medieval History*, 47 (2021), pp. 574–86.
[3] *VM*, 1–2. [4] Ibid., 2–3. [5] Ibid., 3. [6] Ibid., 4. [7] Ibid. [8] Ibid., 5.
[9] Ibid., 6. [10] Ibid. [11] Ibid., 7–8. [12] Ibid., 8. [13] 'иѥже и бысть', ibid.
[14] Ibid., 9. [15] Ibid., 10–12. [16] Ibid., 13–14.

the newly arrived Hungarian ruler.[17] Finally, he appoints a successor and dies, with a funeral service in Latin, Greek, and Slavonic.[18]

The *Life of Methodios* as Papal Literature?

As argued in Chapter 2, the *VC* is unequivocally a monument of Byzantine literature. In the text, 'we' are the East Romans. The *VM* has often been paired with the *VC* in this respect. Ihor Ševčenko, has insisted for instance that the lives of *both* Cyril and Methodius 'are Byzantine documents', that they 'glorify two Byzantines' and that they 'rest in part on Byzantine texts written in Greek'. [19] On closer examination, however, the *VM* is more complicated. Of the eight full A4 pages which make up the text, a mere page in total deals with events which occur in Byzantium, such as Methodios' birth, and under the auspices of the Byzantine empire, such as the embassy to the Khazars and the first mission to Moravia.[20] Four full pages are devoted to Methodios acting as a papal agent, appointed and defended by the pope.[21] Who 'we' are in the *VM* is far from obvious.

This complexity with respect to the *VM*'s allegiance is best demonstrated in the rather peculiar opening of the *Life*. As noted, the text begins with a list of holy men God sent to his people in the aftermath of the fall.[22] The list begins with Old Testament figures like Enoch, Abraham, Isaiah, and Moses, and moves through John the Baptist into the New Testament apostles Peter and Paul.[23] It then mentions they were followed by martyrs and the struggle to weed out heresy.[24] What comes next is an abbreviated account of the ecumenical church councils.[25] It concludes by placing Methodios within this list of succession of holy men, describing him as an equal, 'lesser than some but greater than others'.[26] This takes up nearly two pages of the edition, so almost a quarter of the *VM*.

This section of the text has been of little interest to historians, who have at best noted its unusual nature in the corpus of Byzantine hagiography.[27] Only two studies have recognised this part of the text as a council synopsis.[28] The former of these offered a comparison between the *VM* and another, later, Slavonic-language council synopsis text, albeit in brief.[29] The latter one reproduced these findings to

[17] Ibid., 15–16. [18] Ibid., 17.

[19] I. Ševčenko, 'Religious Missions Seen from Byzantium', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 12–13 (1988–9), pp. 7–27, at p. 13. As noted in Chapter 1, this is also acknowledged in Vavřínek, whose book opens with a whole chapter on Byzantine hagiography to provide a context for his subsequent studies of the *VC* and *VM* individually: *Staroslověnské životy*, pp. 15–29.

[20] *VM*, 2.4–7.3. [21] Ibid., 8–17. [22] Ibid., 1.6–12.

[23] Ibid., 1.13–38. [24] Ibid., 1.32. [25] Ibid., 1.33–8.

[26] 'овѣхъ же малы мьнии, а дроугыихъ болии', ibid., 2.1–2.

[27] B. Floria, *Skazaniia o nachale slavianskoi pis'mennosti* (2nd ed., St Petersburg, 2000), pp. 86–7.

[28] Originally studied in: P. Lavrov, *Kirilo ta Metodii v davn'o-slov'ians'komu pis'menstvi* (Kiev, 1928), pp. 57–9. Reproduced in: Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, pp. 90–2.

[29] Lavrov, *Kirilo ta Metodii*, pp. 57–9.

argue (rather implausibly in my view) that the whole introduction of the *VM* was a confession of faith written by Methodios himself and performed at the papal court.[30] No study has compared the *VM* synopsis to contemporary Byzantine synopses, or explored the consequences of opening the *VM* with such a text. Rather than seeking to attribute agency to Methodios (or his personal confession of faith), I argue that the changes to the source text were authorial interventions, which in turn shape the formulation of both religious and secular authority in the *VM*.

Abbreviated accounts or synopses of the ecumenical church councils are very popular in Byzantine literature, in part due to their centrality to Byzantine orthodox authority.[31] In the Latin West, however, their authority seems much diminished, and their circulation does not at all resemble that of their eastern counterpart. Copyists of one of the earliest translations of the councils into Latin, made by Dionysius Exiguus in the early sixth century, already diluted their authority, by transmitting them together with Dionysius' collection of thirty-eight papal decretals from Siricius (384–99) to Anastasius II (496–8).[32] This widely circulated collection was expanded by Pope Hadrian I to be given to Charlemagne as a definitive collection of canon law in 774, now known to scholars as the *Dionysio-Hadriana*.[33] Drawing on this, Charlemagne promulgated the 789 *Admonitio Generalis*, which also features canons from the councils.[34] In all these sources, however, there are two main differences with the Byzantine tradition. Firstly, the councils are used in a supplementary position, usually alongside papal decretals or more recent synods held regularly within the realm. This tradition of recording more recent local synods has no equivalent in Byzantium. Secondly, they always include a list of the canons that they agreed, alongside these other decretals, for what is clearly practical use: a guide for the behaviour of clerics or

[30] Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, pp. 91–2.

[31] There is a large number of Byzantine so-called *Konzilssynopsen* texts and many still unedited, so it is nearly impossible to generalise. Their main features are that they all seem to use the same sources, and that they can be divided loosely into three types: six council, seven council, and all council (local, etc.) synopses. Sometimes these synopses stand alone, sometimes they are embedded in narratives. For a general introduction to what can be said about the genre and its history, alongside the edition of one such text from the late ninth or early tenth century, see: L. M. Hoffman and W. Brandes, *Eine unbekannte Konzilssynopse aus dem Ende des 9. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main, 2013), pp. 15–25. For a history of the circulation of Byzantine canonical collections proper, rather than synopses, see: D. Wagschal, *Law and Legality in the Greek East: The Byzantine Canonical Tradition, 381–883* (Oxford, 2015), esp. pp. 32–50. For the consolidation of the councils as the true sources of religious authority in late antique Christianity: R. Lim, *Public Disputation, Power, and Social Order in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA, 1995), pp. 217–29.

[32] C. Leyser, 'Law, Memory and Priestly Office in Rome, c.500', *Early Medieval Europe*, 27 (2019), pp. 61–84. I am grateful to Dr Conrad Leyser for letting me see this prior to its publication. A. Firey, 'The Collectio Dionysiana' (http://ccl.rch.uky.edu/dionysiana-article) (last accessed: September 2023).

[33] G. Brown, 'Introduction: the Carolingian Renaissance', in R. McKitterick, ed., *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 1–51, at p. 17.

[34] M. Costambeys et al., *The Carolingian World* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 136.

laymen.[35] This simply does not resemble the Byzantine tradition of summaries of the councils circulating alone, which are normally concerned with those convening and attending the councils, and the heretics excommunicated, but do not list the actual canons agreed. In Byzantium, the canons themselves appeared in separate collections, often but by no means always in the same manuscripts as council synopses.[36] To my knowledge, no Byzantine-style council-synopsis tradition exists in Latin.

Thus, the *VM* is using a truly Byzantine source. Nonetheless, it fundamentally reframes the council synopsis by reallocating power to papal representatives at the expense of Constantinopolitan and other patriarchal agents. To demonstrate just how unusual this is, I compare the *VM* account with two late ninth-century Byzantine council synopses.

The first is found in Photios' letter to Boris of Bulgaria, written only a couple of decades before the death of Methodios.[37] In many ways, a summary of the councils which emerges from the core of the Byzantine patriarchal office, specifically for export in a missionary context, is the closest we may get to the conventional or politically correct *Byzantine* version of the councils in the ninth century. Nonetheless, there is no such thing as an apolitical retelling of the ecumenical councils, even if many of them ultimately resort to the same types of sources such as the *Church History* of Theodoret, the *Epitome* of Theodore Anagnostes' *Tripartite History*, and the chronicles of George the Monk and Theophanes the Confessor.[38] Photios' own excommunication by the papacy discussed in the previous section of the book, and the conflict concerning the ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the Bulgarian church clearly shaped the formulation of his account. Due to this, I will also compare the *VM* with the *Synodicon Vetus*.[39] This account of all synods, ecumenical, non-ecumenical and heretical offers convenient checks and balances on Photios. The text was most probably compiled in the late ninth century, as the last council it records dates to 869–70.[40] It concludes by going beyond the final council, reviewing Patriarch Photios' career from 870–86, and

[35] Ibid., pp. 139–40. See, for instance: Charlemagne, *General Admonition: Aachen, 789*, in trans. P. D. King, *Charlemagne: Translated Sources* (Kendal, 1987), pp. 209–20.

[36] This is the case with all six manuscripts which feature the aforementioned anonymous council edited by Hoffmann and Brandes, but it is much less often the case for integrated synopses found in historical texts or letters: *Eine unbekannte Konzilssynopse*, pp. 37–44 (manuscripts), pp. 17, 20. (examples of integrated synopses); Wagschal, *Law and Legality in the Greek East*, pp. 32–50.

[37] Photios, *Letter to Boris of Bulgaria*, in *Photii patriarchae Constantinopolitani Epistulae et* Amphilochia, eds., L. G. Westerink and B. Laourdas, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1983), 1–1207, pp. 5–15.

[38] Theodoret of Cyrus, *Church History*, in *Theodoret: Kirchengeschichte*, eds. L. Parmentier and F. Scheidweiler (Berlin, 1954); Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *A History of the Church from AD 322 to the Death of Theodore of Mopsuestia AD. 427*, trans. E. Walford (London, 1854); *Theodoros Anagnostes Kirchengeschichte*, ed. G. C. Hansen (Berlin, 1971); George Hamartolos, *Chronicle,* in *Georgii Monachi Chronicon*, ed. C. de Boor, 2 vols. (Stuttgart, 1904); Theophanes Confessor, *Chronicle*, in Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor (Leipzig, 1883); *The Chronicle of Theophanes the Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History, AD 284–813*, trans. C. Mango et al. (Oxford, 1997).

[39] Henceforth *SV*.

[40] Ibid., p. xiii.

demonstrating why his deposition was deserved. The text sits firmly within the so-called 'anti-Photian' dossier discussed in Chapter 3, and was most probably compiled almost contemporaneously with the *VM*, whose *terminus post quem* is 885.[41] As will become clear, largely due to the position taken on Ignatios, it is also more prone to prioritising papal authority than Photios.

Photios' letter offers much longer accounts of the councils, more details about those attending and about the actual contents of the heresies discussed than the *VM*. The *Synodicon Vetus* is also more detailed than the *VM* on those present, but does not usually engage with the theology of the resolutions in great depth. Generally, all three note who called or presided over the council first, and then whom the council anathematised. To illustrate the contrasts between these accounts, I begin with the First Ecumenical Council of 325 in Nicaea, a particularly contentious council since its original canons do not survive.[42] Photios opens his account with the list of attendees, listing bishops first and the emperor overseeing the council last. It is worth offering at least the beginning of his list of attendees in full:

> *Ἡ τοίνυν πρώτη καὶ οἰκουμενικὴ ἁγία σύνοδος ἐν τῇ κατὰ Βιθυνίαν Νικαίᾳ συνεκροτήθη· ὀκτωκαίδεκα δὲ καὶ τριακόσιοι, θείων ἀρχιερέων ὁμήγυρις, τὴν τῆς ἀληθείας κρίσιν ἐνεχειρίζοντο. ὧν ἦσαν προέχοντες Ἀλέξανδρός τε ὁ τὸν Κωνσταντινουπόλεως ἀρχιερατικὸν θρόνον λαχὼν διιθύνειν, ἀνὴρ βαθείᾳ μὲν πολιᾷ, παραπλησίῳ δὲ φρονήματι σεμνυνόμενος, βίου δὲ λαμπρότητι καὶ ὁσιότητι γνώμης καὶ πίστεως ἀκριβείᾳ τὴν εἰς τὸ θεῖον παρρησίαν πολλὴν οἰκειούμενος· καὶ δὴ καὶ Σίλβεστρος καὶ Ἰούλιος, τῆς Ῥωμαϊκῆς ἐκκλησίας ἐπίσημοί τε καὶ διαβόητοι πρόεδροι, αὐτῶν μὲν οὐδέτερος παραγεγονώς, Βίτωνα δὲ καὶ Βικέντιον ἑκάτερος ἀνθ' ἑαυτοῦ κατὰ τὸν οἰκεῖον τῆς ἀρχιερατείας χρόνον τῇ κοινῇ παρεῖναι συνελεύσει προβαλλόμενοι, ἀνθρώπους ἀρετὴν τιμῶντας καὶ εἰς τὸ τοῦ πρεσβυτερίου ἀξίωμα παραγγέλλοντας.*[43]
>
> The first holy ecumenical synod was assembled in Nicaea, in Bithynia, a gathering of 318 of the holy prelates, undertaking the judgement of truth. Its leaders were not only Alexander, who was steering the Constantinopolitan patriarchal throne, a man who was distinguished by great depth, and likeness in wisdom, who since his life was most illustrious and his knowledge most pious, and his faith accurate, acquired great boldness with respect to the divine, but also Sylvester and Julius, the famous and renowned leaders of the Roman church in the time of their rule, each sent forth Vito and Vicentius instead of himself, to be present in the gathering, men who honoured virtue and elected to the title of *presbyter*.[44]

[41] Ibid., p. xv. The date of Methodios' death is noted in: *VM*, 17.10.

[42] Lim, *Public Disputation, Power and Social Order*, pp. 183–6.

[43] Photios, *Letters*, 1.63–74.

[44] I have consulted the translation of Berrigan and White but it is very loose and heavily abbreviated, so this translation is my own. J. R. Berrigan and D. S. White trans., *The Patriarch and the Prince: The Letter of Patriarch Photios of Constantinople to Khan Boris of Bulgaria* (Brookline, MA, 1982).

Photios continues by listing the bishops of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem amongst others attending, and concludes by stating that the whole synod was gathered ('*ἀθροίζων*') by and overseen by Emperor Constantine.[45] What is crucial here is the equal weight being given to the patriarch of Constantinople and the Roman representatives, but that the patriarch comes first. Those who came first or led the council ('*προέχοντες*') are 'both' Alexander 'and indeed' Silvester and Julius, who were not in fact present.

The *SV* is not dissimilar from Photios' account. Both offer a list of the bishops of all five patriarchal sees. Nonetheless, the *SV* shows some crucial subtle differences:

> *ἦς ἐξῆρχον προκαθεζόμενοι Βίτων καὶ Βικέντιος πρεσβύτεροι, τὸν τόπον ἐπέχοντες Σιλβέστρου τοῦ πάπα Ῥώμης καὶ τοῦ διαδόχου αὐτοῦ Ἰουλίου, Ἀλέξανδρος Ἀλεξανδρείας, Μακάριος Ἱεροσολύμων, Εὐστάθιος Ἀντιοχείας, ἐκ προσώπου Μητροφάνους Κωνσταντινουπόλεως Ἀλέξανδρος πρεσβύτερος, Ὅσιος ὁ Κουρδούβης ἐπίσκοπος, καὶ Κωνσταντῖνος ὁ ἐν χριστιανοῖς βασιλεῦσιν ἀπόστολος.*[46]
>
> Its presiding leaders were the presbyters Vito and Vicentios taking the place of Rome's Pope Sylvester and his successor Julius, Alexander of Alexandria, Macarios of Jerusalem, Eustathios of Antioch, the presbyter Alexander representing Metrophanes of Constantinople, Hosios the Bishop of Cordoba, and Constantine the apostle among the Christian emperors.[47]

The *SV* reveals how the Photian account obfuscates the fact that Alexander was not the patriarch of Constantinople, but standing in for Metrophanes of Constantinople. It also shows that Photios' order of attendees elevates Constantinople by placing it first, and the emperor by being explicit that he convened the council. By contrast, the *SV* places papal presbyters first in line, and lists Constantine as simply one of a number of leaders of the council. Whilst the Photian account is inherently less willing to acknowledge or prioritise papal power, the *SV* is clearly what a Byzantine account of the ecumenical councils sympathetic to the papacy looks like in the ninth century. The *VM*, however, goes even further than the *SV*. It simply notes:

> Сельвестръ оустьно трьми сѫты и їи отьць великаго цѣсаря Константина на помощь приимъ сѫньмъ пьрвыи събравь въ Никеи[48]
>
> Sylvester together with three hundred and eighteen fathers, having accepted the help of Caesar Constantine, gathered the first council in Nicaea

[45] Photios, *Letters*, 1.74–89, quote from: 1.87–90.
[46] *SV*, 35.
[47] Ibid., p. 29.
[48] *VM*, 1.33.

The *VM* omits all other patriarchal sees, which are recognised in both Photios' account and the *SV*. There is no mention of the fact that Sylvester was not present at the council nor of his ambassadors, who both Photios and the *SV* acknowledge. In line with the *SV*, the *VM* reduces Constantine from the one who gathers ('*ἀθροίζων*'), to simply the one whose help was received ('на помощь приимъ'). This pattern of papal primacy and the removal of other patriarchal sees is present in all six councils included in the *VM*. Even when both Photios and the *SV* place someone else first, the *VM* grants authority to the Roman representative first, regardless of whether or not they were present or ratified the council at the time of its gathering. The account of the First Council of Constantinople in 381 bears this out. In Photios' letter the account is given as follows:

> […] *εἰς πεντήκοντα δὲ καὶ ἑκατὸν ἄνδρας ἱεροὺς συναγείρετο, ἐξάρχους ἔχουσα Τιμόθεόν τε τὸν Ἀλεξανδρείας καὶ τὸν ἀξιοθαύμαστον τῆς Ἀντιοχείας Μελέτιον Κύριλλόν τε τῶν Ἱεροσολύμων τοὺς ἀρχιερατικοὺς θρόνους ἰθύνοντας*[49]
>
> […] [the council] gathered a hundred and fifty holy men, and had as its leaders both Timothy of Alexandria, and the miraculous Meletios of Antioch and Cyril of Jerusalem, who guided the patriarchal thrones.

Photios proceeds to list attendees, noting 'Gregory, who was bishop of Nyssa in Cappadocia, and who is famous for his works of theology'.[50] He concludes the section by saying 'in addition to whom [Gregory, that is], also Damasus Bishop of Rome, made it known that he upholds the same things, promulgating in harmony with those things formerly agreed after a short while'.[51] The text then turns to the heresy of Arius and concludes with the emperor who held the throne at the time, but without giving Theodosius the same agency as Constantine in having the council convened.[52]

The *SV* is almost completely consistent with this, noting the leaders of the council as 'Timothy of Alexandria, Cyril of Jerusalem […] and the Christ-loving Emperor Theodosius'.[53] Once again, the *SV* is kinder to the pope, noting explicitly that Damasus held his own synod in Rome, the proceedings of which he sent to Constantinople, where they were accepted, rather than that he simply agreed with the council at Constantinople.[54]

[49] Photios, *Letters*, 1.124–7.

[50] '*Γρηγόριος ὅ τε τῆς ἐν Καππαδοκίᾳ Νύσσης ἐπίσκοπος καὶ ὁ τῆς θεολογίας ἐξ ἔργων ἐπώνυμος*', ibid., 1.131–2.

[51] '*οἷς οὐ πολὺς χρόνος καὶ Δάμασος ὁ τῆς Ῥώμης τὰ αὐτὰ κρατύνων ἐγνωρίζετο, σύμφωνος τοῖς προλαβοῦσι καθιστάμενος*', ibid., 1.134–5.

[52] Ibid., 1.127–172.

[53] '*ὁ Ἀλεξανδρείας Τιμόθεος, Κύριλλος Ἱεροσολύμων* […] *καὶ ὁ φιλόχριστος βασιλεὺς Θεοδόσιος*', *SV*, 77.5–7.

[54] Ibid., 78.2–5.

Thus both the *SV* and Photios acknowledge a delay between the council and Damasus' ultimate agreement with the canons the first Constantinopolitan council, even if they disagree on the exact process of this agreement.[55] The *VM* notes, in contrast:

> Дамасъ же и деологъ Григории съ сътъмь патию десатъ отьць и съ великыимь цѣсарьмь Деодосиемь въ Цѣсариградѣ потвьрдиша сватыи соум'болъ, иеже иесть вѣроую въ единъ богъ[56]
>
> Damasus and Gregory the Theologian with 150 fathers and with the great Caesar Theodosius in Constantinople confirmed the holy symbol, which is faith in one God

The text makes the pope, who was not only not present but also not in agreement with the council for some time after its completion, its assembler and leader. It is unclear why exactly the text retains the name of a bishop, in this case Gregory the Theologian, but it may be due to the fact that Gregory of Nazianzus appears quite prominently in the *VC*.

In the Council of Ephesus, Photios opens with Cyril of Alexandria who, he notes, also represented the absent Celestine of Rome, before listing other bishops and ultimately the emperor.[57] This is broadly in agreement with the *SV* which describes Cyril as no more than 'the supporter of the apostles' ('*ὁ τῶν ἀποστόλων συνήγορος*').[58] However, the *VM* opens with 'Celestine and Cyril with two hundred fathers', once again obscuring Celestine's absence.[59]

In the case of the Council of Chalcedon, Photios grants agency first and foremost to Emperor Marcianus, and then to the leaders of the Council, whom he lists as Anatolios, Paschasinos, and Lykinios, whom he calls bishops, and 'with the presbyter Boniface who held the place of Leo the most-holy pope of Rome'.[60] The *SV* is brief on this, asserting that Pulcheria, the emperor's wife urged him to convene the council, and not listing any of its leaders.[61] The *VM* once again renders this purely a papal-led council. Omitting Pulcheria and the bishops Photios mentions, it notes the council was led by 'Leo and Anatolios with the orthodox Caesar Marciansos'.[62]

At the Second Council of Constantinople in 553, Photios notes the leaders were Menas and Eutychios, and 'Vigillius, who held the holy see of Rome, whilst

[55] On potential papal councils held in response, see: H. Marot, 'Les conciles romains des IV et V siecles et le developpement de la primaute', *Istina*, 4 (1957), pp. 435–62. And Dvornik who dates the reaction later, to c. 500: F. Dvornik, *Byzance et la Primauté Romaine* (Paris, 1964), pp. 55–60.

[56] *VM*, 1.34. [57] Photios, *Letters*, 1.172–6. [58] *VS*, 84.3.

[59] 'Келестинь и Кириль съ дъвѣма сътома отьць', *VM*, 1.35.

[60] '*σὺν Βονιφατίῳ πρεσβυτέρῳ τὸν τόπον ἐπέχοντες Λέοντος τοῦ ἁγιωτάτου πάπα Ῥώμης*', Photios, *Letters*, 1.221–3, 216–25 in full.

[61] *VS*, 92.1–5. [62] 'Лъвъ и Анатоль съ правовѣрнымь цѣсарьмь Маркианъмь', *VM*, 1.36.

he was present in the city, was not present at the Synod'.[63] Despite its papal leanings, the *SV* renders the rulers as 'Eutychios of Constantinople, the great Apolinarius of Alexandria, Domnus of Antioch, and the Christ-loving Emperor Justinian'.[64] It continues acknowledging that 'Virgillius of Rome, though present in the city, did not take part in the sessions', the wording of which is sufficiently different to suggest that, as elsewhere, the source is different to that of Photios.[65] Once again, the *VM*'s version of the information is striking. Omitting Eutychios altogether, the author renders the council as being led by 'Vigilius with the god-pleasing Justinian'.[66]

On the third Council of Constantinople in 680/1, Photios notes the leaders as

> *Γεώργιός τε, ᾧ τῆς βασιλίδος πόλεως ὁ ἀρχιερατικὸς θεσμὸς ὑπῆρχεν ἐγκεχειρισμένος, καὶ Θεόδωρος καὶ Γεώργιος, ἐν πρεσβυτέρων ἀξιώματι κατειλεγμένοι, ἅμα διακόνῳ Ἰωάννῃ, οἳ ἀντὶ Ἀγάθωνος τοῦ ἁγιωτάτου πάπα Ῥώμης εἰς τὴν τῶν ἐξάρχων τάξιν ἠριθμοῦντο*[67]
>
> Both Georgios, to whom the patriarchal rule was entrusted, and Theodore and Georgios who held the position of presbyters, together with the *deacon* John, who were a part of the embassy in place of Agatho, the most holy pope of Rome.

As with the First Council of Nicaea, Photios tries to balance the leadership with a 'both … and' clause but places Constantinople before Rome. Also, much like the First Nicaean council *SV* puts the papal legates first, 'the Roman Pope Agatho's representatives, the presbyters Theodore and George and the deacon John'.[68] George the Patriarch of Constantinople comes second and is followed by Antioch and the representatives of Alexandria and Jerusalem.[69] The *VM*, once again, obliterates the papal absence and erases other patriarchal sees. The council was led by 'Agatho, the apostolic pope, together with two hundred and seventy fathers and the honourable Caesar Constantine'.[70] More tellingly still, the *VM* omits the account of the seventh council, dealing with iconoclasm, a uniquely Byzantine issue.

[63] '*Βιγίλιος ὁ τῆς Ῥώμης τὴν ἱερὰν λαχὼν ἐφορείαν, παρὼν μὲν τῇ πόλει, οὐ παρὼν δὲ τῇ συνόδῳ*'. Photios, *Letters*, 1.269–70, 1.264–70 for Menas and Euthychios in full.

[64] '*ἦσπερ ἐξῆρχον οἱ πατριάρχαι προκαθεζόμενοι Εὐτύχιος Κωνσταντινουπόλεως καὶ Ἀλεξανδρείας ὁ μέγας Ἀπολινάριος, Δόμνος Ἀντιοχείας, καὶ βασιλεὺς Ἰουστινιανὸς ὁ φιλόχριστος*, *VS*, 123.3–6.

[65] '*Βιργίλλιος δὲ Ῥώμης παρὼν οὐ συνήδρευσε*', *VS*, 123.6. Compare with above footnote 63.

[66] '**Вътилии съ богъгодьнымъ Иоустин[иан]ъмь**', *VM*, 1.37. The text says Justin, but this may be a scribal error when rendering the name into Slavonic, or it may be the product of confusion about the dates of the council. Editors generally correct it to Justinian.

[67] Photios, *Letters*, 1.321–5.

[68] '*ἦς ἐξῆρχον προκαθεζόμενοι τοποτηρηταὶ τοῦ πάπα Ῥώμης Ἀγάθωνος Θεόδωρος καὶ Γεώργιος πρεσβύτεροι καὶ Ἰωάννης διάκονος*', *SV*, 141.3–4.

[69] Ibid., 141.5–8.

[70] '**Агафонъ апостольскыи папежь съ дъвѣма сътома и о отьць съ чьстьнымь Костантинъмь цѣсарьмь**', *VM*, 1.38.

The purpose of presenting all six councils in full across these three texts is threefold. Firstly, to acknowledge that, since no account is apolitical, the synopses of the councils within Byzantium were far from rigid and unified and could be put to different agendas. Secondly, to demonstrate that even accounting for these internal differences and agendas, by comparing two accounts which come from the two furthest positions in ninth-century Byzantine intellectual circles, the so-called Photian and Ignatian milieus, the stories of these councils still demonstrate basic similarities of narrative. And thirdly, in light of these similarities, the *VM* stands out not simply as an account of the ecumenical councils which is in some sense pro-Ignatian, or anti-Photian, in its sympathy with the pope. Rather, this is an explicitly papal account, far more extreme than even the most pro-papal positions held in Byzantium.

The consistency with which the *VM* does this in all six councils leaves a very particular image of political and religious authority—that is, a firm hierarchy of religious power, with papal primacy as unequivocal and the role of the patriarchate of Constantinople only rarely even acknowledged. This is a striking transformation of a Byzantine text. But it is important to note that the elevation of papal power is entirely at the expense of patriarchal sees, and not at the expense of imperial power. Whilst the pope remains the single consistent source of religious authority, graced with councils he may not even have attended, the only other figure which remains consistently present in the *VM* account is the emperor in the guise of a helping hand.

It is, of course, not unusual to mention the emperor in these accounts, but within the corpus here selected, Photios and the *SV*, the emperor plays a number of different, and at times contradictory, roles in different councils. In Photios' synopsis, Constantine gets pride of place in the First Council of Nicaea, as the 'great and marvellous' ('*ὁ μέγας καὶ ἀξιάγαστος*') emperor who 'both gathered the synod and made it more illustrious through his presence'.[71] In the *SV*, on the other hand, as noted above he is simply an 'apostle among Christian emperors'.[72] Photios leaves both Theodosius I and II (respectively the Council of Constantinople and Ephesus) till last in his account, giving them no credit in its gathering or agenda: Theodosios I, the 'champion and himself famous for his piety', and Theodosios II simply delivering 'ancestral and imperial rule'.[73] The *SV* opens with the arrival of Theodosius I in Constantinople but does not suggest he has any role in the council being gathered.[74] But it assigns full responsibility to Theodosius II, claiming he ordered the Third Ecumenical Council.[75]

[71] '*τήν τε σύνοδον ἀθροίζων καὶ λαμπροτέραν τῇ παρουσίᾳ ἀπεργαζόμενος*', Photios, *Letters*, 1.88–90.

[72] '*ὁ ἐν χριστιανοῖς βασιλεῦσιν ἀπόστολος*', *SV*, 35.

[73] '*πρόμαχος καὶ αὐτὸς τῆς εὐσεβείας γνωριζόμενος*', '*τὴν πατρῴαν καὶ βασίλειον ἀρχὴν*', Photios, *Letters*, 1.169–70; 1.214–5.

[74] *SV*, 77.

[75] '*βασιλεὺς ὁ μικρὸς Θεοδόσιος ἐν Ἐφέσῳ τῶν διακοσίων μακαρίων πατέρων τρίτην οἰκουμενικὴν σύνοδον συγκροτηθῆναι ἐκέλευσεν*', ibid., 84.1–3.

With Chalcedon, imperial agency is attributed in reverse—it is Photios who puts Marcian first, whilst the *SV* briefly notes that the council was the product of Marcian hearing about a papal synod, and ultimately of his wife persuading him to call it.[76]

As noted above, these decisions are not random, and they in turn shape the agendas of the two texts. The particular agendas of those two texts lie beyond the scope of this study. However, what is crucial is that the versatility of order in Photios and the *SV*, whether the emperor is mentioned first or last, and the varied nature of the account of imperial contributions, whether gatherer, assistant, or completely uninvolved, are all flattened in the *VM* to produce a formula of council gathering in which essentially the only constants are the pope (and his envoys) and the emperor. Councils therefore are gathered with the 'great Caesar Constantine', or with 'the great Caesar Theodosios' (whom neither Photios nor the *SV* think was involved).[77] The *VM* omits Theodosios II, but continues with the 'orthodox Caesar Marcian', with the 'god-pleasing Justinian' or with 'the honourable Constantine Caesar'.[78] All of these come after the pope, and where the pope is always in the nominative, they are always grammatically subordinate, in all cases, apart from Constantine the Great where the grammatical construction is slightly different, the emperor is put in an instrumental of accompaniment.

A peculiar structure of religious and political authority emerges. The pope is front and centre in the gathering of ecumenical councils which, as already discussed, were not nearly as influential in the West as they were in the East. And yet, despite the papal primacy, imperial authority comes second, often before or instead of other patriarchal sees. This bipartite system of power essentially acknowledges one ecclesiastical and one political ruler. To my knowledge such a rendering of the councils is original. I argue that this synopsis reveals the structure of authority which underlies the rest of the *VM*, and guides both the organisation of old material and the insertion of so-called 'new' material into the narrative. The text begins with establishing these sources of authority by presenting them as responsible for the very order of orthodoxy, and as emerging from a line of Old Testament prophets and New Testament evangelists. It then goes on to use the pope and emperor for the justification and legitimisation of the Methodian position in Moravia. This is evident first and foremost in the *VM*'s retelling of the *VC*, where Methodios is inserted as an actor in the story of Cyril.

[76] *Ἡ δὲ ἁγία καὶ οἰκουμενικὴ τετάρτη σύνοδος τὸν ἐν βασιλεῦσιν εὐσεβέστατον Μαρκιανὸν συμπαρόντα καὶ συμπνέοντα ἔχουσα*', Photios, *Letters*, 1.216–7. '*Ἀλλὰ καὶ Πουλχερία ἡ εὐσεβὴς αὐγούστα διεγείρειν τὸν σύζυγον οὐ κατώκνησε σύνοδον οἰκουμενικὴν τετάρτην ἐν Χαλκηδόνι τῶν ἑξακοσίων τριάκοντα θεοφόρων πατέρων ἀθροίσασθαι*', *SV*, 92.1–3.

[77] 'великаго цѣсаря Константина', 'съ великыимь цѣсарьмь Деодосиемь', *VM*, 1.33; 1.34.

[78] 'съ правовѣрьныимь цѣсарьмь Маркианъмь', 'съ богоугодьныимь Иоустин[иан]ъмь', 'съ ѹьстьныимь Костантинъмь цѣсарьмь', 1.36, 1.37, 1.38.

'And Methodios with Him': The Life of Cyril in the *Life of Methodios*

As noted above, it is a fact little reflected upon that Methodios barely features in the *VC*. He is absent both in the most studied moments of the text, such as the invention of the Slavonic alphabet, but also in moments where it would seem natural for him to be mentioned—such as the section on Cyril's childhood offering information about his father and six siblings.[79] On the basis of this, I will in turn assess the representation of this early material in the *VM* to argue two things. The first is that the author of the *VM* had no knowledge of the life of Methodios prior to his arrival in Moravia as a papal representative, beyond that which is contained in the *VC*; and that all the so-called 'new' material about the early life of Methodios is fictitious, inserted into the text to strengthen key arguments proposed by the *VM* and its rendering of Methodios as papal representative. And secondly, the *VM* redistributes the agency and power of Cyril in the *VC* either to Methodios and therefore the two of them as a pair, or to the pope. This latter papal elevation is in line with the propagation of papal primacy found in the *VM*'s synopsis of the ecumenical councils.

The *VM*'s first insertion of Methodios into the earlier life of Cyril is in its account of the mission to the Khazars. It is clear from the *VM* account of the Khazar mission, that the author did not have access to any new information to add to the course of events at the Khazar court. Omitting the seven full pages of debates found in the *VC*, and even the short mention of Methodios in the *VC* on the journey back from Khazaria, the *VM* simply stresses that:

> […] съ же молитвою а философъ словесы преможеть я и посрамисте[80]
>
> [...] and he [Methodios] with prayers, and the philosopher with words, they overcame and embarrassed them [the Jews]

The explicit insertion of Methodios in this narrative does two things. The first is to distribute the agency of Cyril alone in *VC* to both Cyril and Methodios. The second is to diminish the role of disputation by subordinating it to prayer. In this abbreviated account, therefore, the careful balance between revelation and education found in the *VC* is rewritten. Prayer is no longer simply a source of revelation of knowledge to be used in disputation, as in the *VC*; prayer alone is an agent in this scene, and one with equal if not greater effect. Placing Methodios and his method of countering heathens first, the *VM* suggests that hierarchically prayer is superior to philosophical words. One wonders how exactly a prayer was useful in 'embarrassing and overcoming' Jewish scholars.

[79] *VC*, 2.1–2 (birth), 14–16 (Moravian mission). [80] *VM*, 4.4.

Methodios is also inserted into the Moravian mission, narrated after the abbreviated account of the trip to Khazaria. The request for a bishop from Rastislav in the *VC* becomes a request for teachers from Rastislav and Sviatopluk in the *VM*. Other than this, the emperor's initial words to Cyril are much the same. In the *VC* he tells him that 'no one else can carry this out like you', which is simply paraphrased in the *VM*.[81]

The *VM* proceeds by including Methodios in the imperial instructions to go to Moravia and dilutes Cyril's agency in the very account of the invention of the alphabet. Both agree that God made the letters appear to Cyril, and without granting creative agency to Cyril as an actor. The *VC* notes:

> […] въскорѣ же и емоу богъ яви, послоушаѥ молитвь своихь рабь и абиѥ сложи писмена начѧть бесѣдꙋ писати еѵаггелскꙋ: испрьва бѣ слово и слово бѣ оу бога и богъ бѣ слово и проѵеѥ[82]
>
> […] and soon, God revealed them [the letters] to him, having listened to the prayer of his servants, and he immediately put together the letters and began to write the words of the evangelist: in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God and so forth

Whereas the *VM* renders this as:

> […] да тоу яви богъ фолософоу словѣнскы книгы и абиѥ оустроивъ писмена и бесѣдоу съставль поути сѧ ятъ моравьскаго, поимъ Модеодия[83]
>
> […] and God revealed the Slavonic books to the philosopher, and he, having immediately arranged the letters, and having compiled an oration, headed on the road to Moravia, taking Methodios with him.

The 'oration' or text put together by Cyril may well be the Gospel mentioned in the *VC*. But the omission of an explicit mention of the Gospel, and its replacement by the vague 'oration' or 'speech' ('бесѣдоу'), goes some way towards diminishing Cyril's agency. The fact that Cyril writes the Gospel in the *VC* is crucial in the narrative due to the forthcoming New Testament disputation. Here, no such dispute follows, and no such narrative structure exists, so the *VM* can spare Cyril some of his success, and shift significance towards 'Methodios with him'.

More crucially, when Cyril retreats to prayer by himself in the *VC*, the *VM* makes clear that both brothers retreated to prayer, 'together with others who were

[81] 'не можеть инь никтоже исправити якоже ты', *VC*, 14.8. 'инъ сего да не можетъ сътворити развѣ тебе', *VM*, 5.6.

[82] *VC*, 14.14. [83] *VM*, 5.11.

in the same spirit as them.'[84] The *VM* seeks both to increase the role of Methodios, who is now credited with some of the prayers (once again) that led to the alphabet revelation, but also to elevate different kinds of legitimacy from those found in the *VC*. Cyril's disputations and his education are sidelined here in favour of the prayer of Methodios or elsewhere, as we shall see shortly, the pope and the institution of the church.

The most striking divergence between the narratives of Cyril's travels in the *VC* and *VM* is to do with the order of events in the immediate aftermath of the mission to Moravia and it is noted in some scholarship (albeit not in most).[85] As I laid out in Chapter 4, my purpose is not to resolve these contradicting accounts, but rather to explain them.

In the *VC*, the lone philosopher Cyril goes from Moravia straight to Pannonia/Balaton, on the invitation of Kočel, the local ruler. After giving Kočel the Slavonic gospel, Cyril goes to Venice and holds the third major disputation in the *VC*, with Latin bishops on trilingualism.[86] Once in Venice, Pope Hadrian II (867–72) hears about Cyril and calls him to Rome, joyfully receiving the relics of St Clement. Cyril dies in Rome shortly afterwards and his brother Methodios appears trying to take his body to Mount Olympus.

In the *VM*, however, the order of these events is entirely reframed. Whilst the two brothers are both in Moravia for the initial mission, Pope Nicholas (858–67) calls them directly to Rome and legitimises their teaching by placing the Slavonic gospel on the altar of St Paul and anointing Methodios.[87] Subsequently, it is in Rome rather than Venice that trilingual priests object to the Slavonic gospel, on the basis of the claim that there should only be three holy languages. It is not Cyril's eloquence alone that refutes the priests, however, because this time the pope resolves the problem:

> […] апостоликъ пилатъны и трьязычьникы нарекль проклатъ и повелѣ единомоу епископоупоу, иже бѣ тоюже язею больнъ и свати отъ оученикъ словѣньскъ три попы а ѕ̄ анагноста[88]
>
> […] and the pope having called them Pilatists and trilingualists, cursed them and ordered one bishop, who was sick with this sickness, to anoint three priests from the Slavonic students and two readers.

[84] 'на молитвоу са наложиста и съ инѣми, иже бахоу тогоже доуха', *VM*, 5.10.

[85] Most recently by M. Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia (858–882): Papal Power and Political Reality* (Leiden, 2014), pp. 84–5, amongst others. But for instance not mentioned in: T. Lienhard, 'The Life of Constantine, the Life of Methodios and the History of the Slavs in the Ninth Century: A Reassessment', *Early Medieval Europe*, 28 (2020), pp. 57–78.

[86] *VC*, 15–6. On the dispute with the Venetians, see: Chapter 2.

[87] 'положь словѣнскоѥ евангелиѥ на олтари сватаго Петра апостола, свати же на поповьство блаженаго Медтодия', *VM*, 6.1.

[88] *VM*, 6.4.

Cyril is replaced altogether by the pope. The role of the pope in this episode is in line with the pope of the synopsis of the ecumenical councils earlier in the *VM*: he gathers councils and he anathematises heretics. Moreover, resolution comes not through trying to persuade the Latins otherwise as in the *VC*, but through the use of the religious hierarchy of the church, which orders those who disagree to anoint the Slavonic students. In the *VM* therefore, the legitimacy of Slavonic is not expressed through careful citation of scripture, but through the institutionalisation of its preachers.

At this stage, the *VM* disposes with Cyril altogether. In the *VC*, Cyril goes to Balaton from Moravia alone. In the *VM*, he goes from Moravia to Rome with Methodios and dies there. Then the pope sends Methodios alone to Kočel in Pannonia. The author uses Cyril's premature deathbed to further stress Methodios' newly invented significance. In a vastly different speech to his lonesome deathbed prayer in the *VC*, Cyril here dies before his brother and tells him the following:

> Се, брате, вѣ соупроуга бѧховѣ, ѥдиноу браздоу тѧжаща, и азъ на лѣсѣ падаю свои дьнь съконьчавъ[89]
>
> Here, brother, we were both in a yoke, pulling one plough, and I fall in the field, having completed my days

This sense of the togetherness of the brothers is ubiquitous in scholarship, but of course nowhere to be seen in the *VC*. The choice of agrarian metaphor is particularly telling, as it is widely used in funerary literature in Greek and Latin. Vavřínek has already pointed to a similarity with *Oration 43* of Gregory of Nazianzus, upon the death of Basil of Caesarea, which notes that the parting of Gregory and Basil when the latter left Athens was like the cutting of a body in two, 'or like the parting of two oxen that have shared the same manger and yoke, bellowing piteously for each other in distress at their separation'.[90] The very same metaphor can be found in Ambrose, the archbishop of Milan's oration upon the death of his actual brother:

> Bos bovem requirit, seque non totum putat, et frequenti mugitu pium testator amorem, si forte defecerit cum quo ducere collo aratra consuevit: et etgo te, frater, non requiram?[91]

[89] Ibid., 7.2.

[90] Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, p. 115. '*ἢ μόσχων συντρόφων καὶ ὁμοζύγων διάζευξις γοερὸν μυκωμένων ἐπ' ἀλλήλοις καὶ οὐ φερόντων τὴν ἀλλοτρίωσιν*', Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 43*, in *Grégoire de Nazianze. Discours funèbres en l'honneur de son frère Césaire et de Basile de Césarée*, ed. F. Boulenger (Paris, 1908), 24.4; Gregory of Nazianzus, Ambrose of Milan, *Funeral Orations*, trans. L. McCauley and M. McGuire (Washington, 2003), pp. 48–9.

[91] Saint Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, *On his Brother Satyrus*, in Sancti Ambrosii, 'De Excessu Fratris sui Satyri', in *Opera Omnia, Juxta eiditonem monachorum sancti benedicti*, Vol. 4 (Paris, 1836), 8. I am grateful to Dr Efthymios Rizos for pointing out this similarity.

> If ever an ox has sought the stricken mate with which it was accustomed to be yoked to the plough, and has felt that a part of itself is missing and has given proof of its tender affection by frequent bellowing, why, brother should I not long or you?[92]

In short, the *VM* is a radical departure from the *VC*, but not only because it reorders the narrative and foregrounds or altogether inserts Methodios in the account of events such as the Moravian mission. It is also an ideological reframing of the *VC* material. The text reframes Cyril by omitting his rhetorical abilities and the *VC*'s preoccupation with argument. In the *VM*, Cyril is simply one half of a brotherly pair. Meanwhile, the defence of the Slavonic alphabet is entrusted not to rhetoric, but to pope and emperor, the two authority figures foregrounded in the synopsis of the ecumenical councils which opens the text. The new ideological agenda of the *VM*'s author comes into even sharper focus when we turn to the 'new material' inserted into the text. This new material foregrounds another innovative but key relationship in the text: that between Methodios and the Slavs, to which I turn next.

Methodios and the Slavs

As noted above, it seems most probable that the author of the *VM* did not have any additional new sources for the lives of Cyril or Methodios, before the former's death and the latter's arrival in Moravia. Yet there are moments of the early lives of Cyril and Methodios in the *VM* which contain 'new information', not contained in the *VC*. I believe the bulk of this information is fictitious and added to consolidate a second relationship, between Methodios and the Slavs, upon which his institutional legitimacy as a bishop would ultimately be based later in the text. As demonstrated in Chapters 1–3, there is no sense that the Slavonic mission is a difference in kind rather than degree within Cyril's educational and disputational trajectory in the *VC*. By contrast, in the *VM*, both pope and emperor perform acts which strengthen Methodios' attachment to the Slavs.[93]

The first instance of what historians have considered to be 'new information' in the *VM* is to do with Methodios' time prior to entering Mount Olympus. In the *VC*, he first appears already as a monk and is not mentioned in the passage on Cyril's youth. The *VM* does two key things with the family and early years of Cyril in addition to adding Methodios. The first is to remove the specific Byzantine titles of Leo, the brothers' father. In the *VC* he is said to hold the 'rank of *droungarios*

[92] Gregory of Nazianzus, Ambroise of Milan, *Funeral Orations*, trans. McCauley and McGuire, p. 164.

[93] Part of this analysis has already been published in my article: M. Ivanova, 'Inventing and Ethnicising Slavonic in the Long Ninth Century', *Journal of Medieval History*, 47 (2021), pp. 574–86.

under the *strategos*'.[94] This title makes good sense in the *VC*, given its intended educated Byzantine audience. Ševčenko has shown that mentioning this position would have had particular social connotations in ninth-century Byzantium, which would have helped Byzantine readers to situate Cyril's family within Byzantine society.[95] Its omission from the *VM* fits within what I argue more generally, through the church councils and the retelling of the life of Cyril, to be the de-Byzantinisation of the story of the brothers, and its reconfiguration around a papal and Central-European core. The Moravian author of the *VM* may not have known or understood these titles or may have thought them irrelevant to their new intended readership.

But the author does then insert a new piece of information, and that is that Methodios was given a secular position of power in his region of birth:

> дондеже цѣсарь быстрость его, кнажение емоу дасть дьржати Словѣнско, рече же азъ, яко прозьрѧ, како и хотѧше оучителѧ Словѣниемъ посълати и пьрьваго архиепископоупа, да бы прооучилъ сѧ вьсѣмъ обычаемъ Словѣньскыимъ и обыклъ я по малоу[96]
>
> And when the Caesar heard about his quickness, he gave him a Slavonic 'kniazhenie' (lordship) to hold, I would say, as if foreseeing how he was going to send [him] as a teacher to the Slavs and first archbishop, in order that he had studied all the Slavonic customs and began to become accustomed to them [the Slavs] little by little

Dvornik has argued that a 'khiazhenie' is the Greek 'archontia' ('ἀρχοντία'), an administrative unit smaller than a theme, and that this was the Strymon 'archontia', found north of Thessaloniki, which was later turned into a theme and is attested to by the ninth-century seal of an 'archōn' ('ἄρχων') of Strymon.[97] But an 'archōn' ('ἄρχων') of Strymon is not found in the Uspenski *Taktikon*, or list of offices, which dates to ca. 842–3 and is not textually attested elsewhere until Philotheos' *Kletorologion*, or *Lists of Precedence*, a list of offices dated to September 899.[98] This means its establishment may well have post-dated the mission to Moravia in ca. 864.

[94] 'сань драгар'скыи подь стратигом', *VC*, 2.1.

[95] I. Ševčenko, 'On the Social Background of Cyril and Methodios', repr. in his *Byzantium and the Slavs: In Letters and Culture* (Cambridge, MA, 1991), pp. 479–92.

[96] *VM*, 2.5.

[97] F. Dvornik, *Les légendes de Constantin et de Méthode vues de Byzance* (Prague, 1933), pp. 15–18. 'Seal of Bardas Imperial Spatharios and Archon of the Strymon (ninth century)', *Dumbarton Oaks Online Catalogue of Byzantine Seals*, https://www.doaks.org/resources/seals (last accessed: September 2023).

[98] F. Uspenski, 'Vizantiiskaia tabel' o rangakh', *Izvestiia russkogo arkheologicheskogo rnstituta v Konstantiopole,* 3 (1898), pp. 98–137. Philotheos, *Kletorologion*, ed., trans. N. Oikonomides, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des 9e et 10e siècles* (Paris, 1972), pp. 80–235.

Furthermore, whilst there are twenty-five ninth-century 'archōn' office holders in the largest Byzantine seal database hosted by Dumbarton Oaks, the title could also be applied in a neutral way to refer to foreign rulers as well as imperial bureaucrats.[99] That an 'archōn' ruled an 'archontia' therefore is far from obvious. In fact, the noun 'archontia' is rather rare in Byzantine literature. A word search of the word in the whole corpus of the *Thesaurus Linguae Grecae*, the largest corpus of ancient, medieval, and early modern Greek texts, offers a mere thirty-five results.[100] By contrast a word search for 'archon' gives us over 9,000. Of these thirty-five, only six date to the tenth century or earlier, and half of the six use the term figuratively or abstractly.[101] All three uses of the term to designate political territory come from the corpus of Constantine Porphyrogennitos which also post-dates the mission of Moravia.[102]

In short, Dvornik's conceptual jump from 'kniazhenie' to a concrete Byzantine office named an 'archontia' in the ninth century seems unwarranted. Rather, it seems more likely that the use of this term by the author of the *VM* is best explained within the text and its immediate surroundings rather than through some knowledge of a sometime existent, possibly local administrative office in Byzantine Greece.

In fact, the text makes it clear that this appointment was made to serve a particular function in the narrative. In the only use of the first person singular in the text, the author comments that with this appointment it was, 'I say, as if [the emperor was] foreseeing how he was going to send him as a teacher of the Slavs and their first archbishop'.[103] It is perhaps best read with a smirk on the author's part. They seek to make a clear textual connection between this imperial appointment and the later ecclesiastical one, and they are quite happy to do it in the most unsubtle manner possible. This appointment by the emperor, to a generic secular

[99] The people called 'archon' in the protocols for greetings in the *Book of Ceremonies*, for example, includes a range of peoples whose dominion would not be considered an 'archontia': Armenian lateral rulers, the rulers of the Caucasian Albania, Bulgaria, Sardinia, Rusia, the Pechenegs, and even the 'archontes' of the Turks. Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *The Book of Ceremonies*, ed. J. J. Rieske and R. Niebhur, trans. A. Moffatt and M. Tall (Canberra, 2017), II.46–8.

[100] *TLG*, http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/Iris/inst/tsearch.jsp#s=15 (last accessed: September 2023).

[101] The bulk of results actually come from twelfth- to fourteenth-century monastic acts and *typika* (nine results), and early-modern (fifteenth- to seventeenth-century) Greek texts (twelve results) such as Theodore Zygomalas and Marinus Buniales. Ibid. Theodore of Stoudite, uses it as a synonym for 'arches' ('*ἀρχῆς*'). '*Τηλικούτης οὖν ἐπιλαβόμενοι ἀρχῆς καὶ ἀρχοντίας, ὦ τέκνα, καὶ ταῦτα δωρεὰν παρὰ θεοῦ*', Theodore Studites, *Sermones Catecheseos Magnae*, 1–2.23–25, in *S. Patris Nostri Theodori Studitae, Magnae Catecheseos Sermones, Nova Patrum Bibliotheca 9/2 (Cat. 1–77)*, ed. J. Cozza-Luzi (Rome, 1888–1905). John Chrysostom uses it abstractly: '*Τούτων τοίνυν ὡς προείρηται τὴν ἐξουσίαν καὶ τὴν ἀρχοντίαν καὶ τὸν ζῆλον διαδέχονται οἱ τίμιοι διδάσκαλοι*', John Chrysostom, *In Joannem Theologum*, in *MPG*, 59 (Paris, 1857–66), pp. 614.9–10. And in the *Life of Gregentios* it is a proper noun, the name of a woman: '*Ἡ δὲ μακαρία Ἀρχοντία* (*τοῦτο γὰρ ἦν ὄνομα τῇ ἀοιδίμῳ ἐκείνῃ γυναικί*)', *The Life of Gregentios of Taphar*, 8.232.

[102] Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *De administrando imperio*, 30.99–101 (West Balkans), 27.1–2 (Lombardy). Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople, *Short History*, ed. trans. C. Mango (Washington, DC, 1990), 45.9–10 (Crimea).

[103] 'рече же азъ, яко прозьра, како и хотяше оучитела Словѣниемъ посълати и пьрьваго архиепископа', *VM*, 2.5.

position, makes good sense in line with the bipartite structure of power established by the *VM* in its opening council synopsis, where the emperor is the sole representative of secular authority. Through this appointment Methodios is connected to the Slavs from his youth by one of two kinds of legitimate authority in the *VM*.

There are broader political consequences of this appointment by the unspecified Byzantine emperor, and a more immediate reason, specific to the language of the text why the author may have chosen the word 'kniazhenie'. The *VM* does not simply strengthen the legitimacy of Methodios. It also weakens the legitimacy of Frankish political authority over the Slavs. There are three kinds of political titles in the *VM*. There is the king ('кроулѧ') on the Western front, the Caesar ('цѣсарь') or emperor, and then there is the Ruler ('kniaz') of the Slavs or Slavic ruler ('kniaz'), ('кнѧзь словѣньскъ'), which refers to Rastislav and Kočel.[104] When the emperor appoints Methodios, he appoints him to a Lordship ('kniazhenie') of the Slavs, or Slavic lordship ('kniazhenie'), ('кнѧжение Словѣнско').[105] It is never expressed thus in the text, but that would make Methodios, technically a Slavic ruler ('kniaz') ('кнѧзь словѣньскъ') like Rastislav and Kočel. It seems therefore, that although the primary reason for inserting this clearly fictitious appointment is to do with connecting Methodios to the Slavs from an early age, the text also more subtly suggests that the emperor has power to appoint political rule over Slavic peoples, over and above western kings. By contrast, the king ('кроулѧ'), on the Western frontier, is described explicitly as 'an enemy of Moravia'.[106]

It is worth noting here that there is only one other package of original information in the early life of Methodios, for which it is clear the *VM* uses another source. The text provides a very specific account of the monastery Methodios joins after his return from the Khazar mission—Polychronion ('Полихронъ'). This monastery itself remains hard to find in Byzantine records and its frequent identification with the monastery of Polychnion where Theophanes Confessor was made a monk appears, as Francis Thomson has argued, to be incorrect.[107] Even if Polychron is to be distinguished from Polychnion, the *VM* still offers extremely precise information about the monastery 'which had an income of up to twenty-four [measures] of gold and in which there lived more than seventy monks'.[108] The source for this clearly must be some sort of typicon of a monastery, called perhaps Polychron, perhaps Polychronion, probably on Olympus. This anomaly remains the only new information inserted into the early life of Methodios in the *VM* which appears to actually use an external source, rather than simply being fictitiously added to better frame later events. It does not affect the argument that

[104] Ibid., 9.1 (king), 2.5. (Ceaser), 5.1 (Slavic *kniaz*).
[105] Ibid., 2.5.
[106] 'врагоу Моравскаго', *VM*, 9.1.
[107] F. Thomson, 'The Name of the Monastery Where Theophanes Confessor Became a Monk: *ΠΟΛΙΧΝΙΟΝ* OR *ΠΟΛΥΧΡΟΝΙΟΝ*?', *Analecta Bollandiana*, 125 (2007), pp. 120–38.
[108] *VM*, 4.6.

the text is proposing more broadly, however, nor the way it uses 'new' information to do so.

Leaving this anomaly aside, the connection between Methodios and the Slavs is ratified by secular authority in this first instance of new information in the *VM*. The first mission to Moravia, sent by the emperor, marks a second institutional strengthening of the association between Methodios and the Slavs. This strong relationship between Methodios and the Slavs has no parallel in the *VC*. The *VC* does not even mention the fact that Cyril speaks Slavonic; it is simply assumed from the fact he receives the alphabet.[109] The *VC* presents the invitation from Rastislav as a question of conversion which in turn reveals the high status of the Byzantine polity as a lawgiver:

> людемь нашимь погань'ства се ѡтвръг'шимь и по христїан'скы се законь дрьжещемь, оучителя не имамы такого, иже ни бы въ свои ѣзыкь истоую вѣрѫ христїан'скѫю сказаль, да се быше и ины страны зрече подобили намь. То посли ны, владыко, епископа и оучителя такого, ѡть вась бо на в'се страны добрь законь исходить[110]
>
> Our people have turned away from paganism, and abide by Christian law, yet we do not have such a teacher, who would tell us the true Christian faith in our language, in order that other countries having seen us would imitate us. So send us, ruler, such a bishop and teacher, for it is from you that good law is given to all regions.

The *VC* focuses on the act of conversion, which has already occurred, and on Christian law in particular. The leader does not identify himself or his people as Slavs, and the *VC* calls him a 'Moravian ruler' ('Морав'скы кнѣзь').[111] He simply requests vernacular preaching. In fact, nowhere in the account of the initial mission and invitation to Moravia is the language or ethnicity of those involved specified in the *VC*.[112] It is not until Cyril's arrival in Balaton, that the books he is translating are specified as 'Slavonic', and it is not until the Venetian debate that the letters are referred to as being created 'for the Slavs' by the Latin priests.[113] That is not to say that Cyril did not preach in Slavonic, or that Rastislav did not speak Slavonic, but simply that this was not of primary significance for the author and argument of the *VC*.

In contrast, the *VM*, as noted above, first introduces the Central-European ruler as a ruler ('kniaz') of the Slavs ('кнѧзь словѣньскъ') and his appeal is not on the basis of Byzantine legitimacy or law giving, but specifically on the basis of

[109] *VC*, 14.6–9, 13–14. [110] *VC*, 14.3–5.
[111] Ibid., 14.2. [112] Ibid., 14.1–18, 15.1–18.
[113] 'вел'ми словен'скыи книгы', ibid., 15.18–19. 'како си ты сътвориль ныня Словѣнемь книгы', ibid., 16.2.

ethnicity.[114] The text goes so far as actually to exclude the Byzantine polity itself from the request and make it particular to someone who already has a relationship with the Slavs. The *VM* renders Rastislav's request as a paired request with Sviatopluk, his successor, who receives Methodios as archbishop:

> яко божиею милостию съдрави иесмь и соуть въ ны въшьли оучителе мнози крьстияни из Влахъ и из Грькъ и из Нѣмьць оучаще ны различь, а мы Словѣни проста чадь и не имамъ, иже бы наставилъ на истиноу и разоумъ съказалъ. То добрѣви владыко, посъли такъ моужь, иже ны исправить вьсакоу правьдоу[115]
>
> By the mercy of God we are in good health, there have come to us many Christian teachers from the Italians, from the Greeks, and from the Germans, teaching us different [things], but we, the Slavs, are simple people and we do not have someone, who would lead us to truth and would give us understanding. So, good ruler, send us such a man, who would establish all righteousness!

It is notable that Rastislav does not ask for a bishop in the *VM*, as he does in the *VC*: he simply asks for a teacher. This will be discussed later, but it is clearly to do with the reconfiguration of authority in the *VM*, which accepts that it is the pope and not the emperor that has the power to appoint bishops in the region of Moravia.

The invitation for a teacher, as presented in the *VM*, is specifically centred on the Slavs and their nature. In its list of ethnic disambiguation, the author explicitly mentions the 'Greeks' as unsuited to this task (even though Methodios' first language was probably Greek). Thus in the *VM*, although Rastislav is writing a letter to a Byzantine emperor, in it he explicitly disqualifies the possibility of Byzantine missionary work, and necessitates someone who knows Slavonic specifically and the Slavs as people. It is no coincidence therefore that the *VM* stresses Methodios' efforts to get to know and learn to love their habits earlier in the text.

Where the *VC* presents Cyril as an unequivocally Byzantine imperial agent, whose knowledge rests on a Greek-language education, the *VM* seeks to stress the particular non-Greek-ness of the teacher requested by the Rastislav. The relationship established between Methodios and the Slavs in his youth, therefore, is crucial to the initial Moravian mission, as a mission with ethnic specificity, one requesting a specific person, rather than the general assistance of the Byzantine polity as a lawgiver. This second imperial act of patronage therefore is explicitly not institutional. As noted above, the emperor in the *VM* does not appoint Methodios (or Cyril) to a religious post, he does not send him as a bishop. He once appoints Methodios to a secular lordship ('kniazhenie'), and once sends him as a teacher.

[114] *VM*, 5.1. [115] Ibid., 5.2–3.

This same affinity between Methodios and the Slavs is also twice strengthened by the pope. The first instance is his letter of response to Kočel's request for a preacher. The pope replies to Kočel by saying:

> […] не тебе единомоу тъкъмо нъ вьсѣмъ странамъ тѣмъ словѣньскыимъ съмь и оучитель отъ бога и отъ сватаго апостола Петра, пьрваго настольника и ключедьржьца цѣсарьствию небесьномоу[116]
>
> […] not only to you but to all those regions of the Slavs, I send him [Methodios] as a teacher from God and from the holy apostle Peter, the first [enthroned] and key-keeper of the heavenly kingdom

Thus, Methodios becomes personally associated with the Slavonic peoples, and is not sent specifically to one secular ruler or another, but to the Slavs as an ethnic group and all lands they occupy. So Methodios is sent only as a teacher twice: first by the emperor (to the Moravians) and then by the pope (to the Pannonians). It is only after Kočel receives Methodios as a teacher, that he sends him back and asks the pope 'to elevate him to the bishopric in Pannonia'.[117] The pope obliges. Thus, in striking parallel with the emperor, Methodios is twice granted patronage by the highest ecclesiastical authority recognised in the text, once as teacher and once as bishop.

This parallel Methodian elevation, by emperor and pope, is tightly crafted by the *VM*'s author. The text goes to great lengths to avoid any possibility of confusion about whose authority reigns supreme over what. As noted, in the *VM* the initial request by Sviatopluk and Rastislav is for a teacher not for a bishop, as it is in the *VC*. In *VM*'s aforementioned papal letter to Kočel, Rastislav, and Sviatopluk, where the pope sends Methodios as a teacher to all the lands of the Slavs, he also offers some narrative clarification on what had formerly occurred when Cyril and Methodios first arrived in Moravia. The pope notes that the rulers of Moravia and Balaton had asked for a teacher not only from the pope but also from Emperor Michael.[118] Unlike Michael, the pope was unable to offer a teacher as swiftly, but:

> она же оувѣдѣвъша апостольскаго стола достояща ваша страны, кромѣ канона не створисте ничьсоже, нъ къ намъ придосте и сватаго Климента моши несоуше[119]
>
> the two of them [Cyril and Methodios], having found out that your land [i.e. Moravia and Balaton] belongs to the apostolic throne, did not do anything against the canons, but came to us and brought the relics of Saint Clement'

[116] Ibid., 8.2.
[117] 'да и емѣ сватить на епископьство въ Панонии', ibid., 8.17.
[118] Ibid., 8.8.
[119] Ibid., 8.10.

This passage is key. The author is carefully navigating political and ecclesiastical authorities to ensure, by using words attributed to the pope himself, that Methodios did nothing uncanonical. The brothers immediately recognised papal authority and the boundaries of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. It goes without saying by this point that there is no such concern in the *VC*, where Cyril travels essentially unbothered by ecclesiastical jurisdiction and spends time in Moravia and Balaton, preaching and converting without hesitation.

The fact the *VM* goes to such length to clarify this, however, points to the complexity of the position the text is trying to propagate. The *VM* is clunkier than the *VC*. Where the latter is propelled forward by its disputations and its roaming protagonist, the *VM* is steeped in clarifications of the story found in the *VC*.

Some of these insertions and complications are clearly intending to do little more than include Methodios in the life of Cyril. However, it is evident that once the author decided to connect and base the validity of Methodios' position as bishop in Moravia on the early life of Cyril, they found the *VC* wanting. Its protagonist and his lengthy disputations offered little interest in or engagement with the institution of the church, and had to be removed, and balanced by prayer or the pope's personal intervention. The *VC*'s account of Cyril's time in Moravia and Balaton without papal approval was clearly out of line with the authorial hierarchy accepted by the *VM* and its author; thus once again the *VM* used the pope to correct this, stressing the brothers immediately bowed to papal jurisdiction. Furthermore, the idea of Kočel in particular, asking Cyril to go to Balaton, as if he had personal agency to choose teachers, is a problem for the *VM*, which has to be resolved by Kočel asking the pope not once, but twice for Methodios, first as teacher and then as bishop. And the *VC*'s appeals to Hellenic learning, Roman territorialism, and Byzantine superiority both in the words of Cyril, but also in the words of Sviatopluk, were found unnecessary, to be omitted, or transformed entirely into an anti-Greek request for preachers familiar with the Slavs as people.

In short, the *VM* is truly a radical transformation of the story of the *VC*. This is made clear from the very outset of the text, which uses the ecumenical councils to establish a bipartite definition of authority, with the pope as primary ecclesiastical leader, and the emperor as his assistant and only legitimate secular ruler. It then proceeds to utilise both of these authorities to formalise a strong relationship between Methodios and the Slavs upon which Methodios' claim to the bishopric of Pannonia lies. It does so firstly through the emperor. The *VM* insists that the emperor appoints Methodios prophetically to a Slavonic *kniazhenie*, permitting him to learn about the Slavs, and then sends him and his brother more informally as teachers to Moravia. It then strengthens this through a double papal promotion. The request of the Moravian kings is explicitly not for a Greek, and so only Methodios, with his prior relation to the Slavs, is eligible. Cyril therefore has to die in Rome before Methodios goes to Balaton, but Methodios is sent by the pope not just to Balaton but to all the lands of the Slavs. This initial mission as teacher

is then formalised by a second papal appointment, this time appointing Methodios as bishop of Pannonia.

In doing this, the *VM* transforms its main source, the *VC*, first and foremost by inserting Methodios into stories from which he is originally absent, whether in Khazaria or Moravia, and secondly by diminishing the agency of Cyril, either by distributing some of it to Methodios, all of it to the pope, or by removing Cyril from crucial moments of the *VC* like the Balaton mission altogether. Thus, Methodios is firstly attached to Cyril, as an ox pulling the same yoke, formulating a fraternal unity in purpose, absent not only from the *VC* but also from the immediate reception of the two brothers in the Latin church. This was only resurrected, as noted earlier, from the fourteenth century, to reach its apotheosis in the nineteenth and dominate historiography to this day. If this is what the *VM* is doing, therefore, who is this text *for*? In the chapter that follows, I explore the two potential intellectual and intertextual contexts for the production of a text like the *VM*, namely contemporary Byzantine and Latin textual culture, and make concrete arguments *for* the context which occasioned the formulation of such a particular model of authority.

6

Popes, Bishops, and Emperors between Rome and Constantinople

The major undertaking of this chapter is an attempt to situate the *VM* and its radical transformation of the story of the invention of Slavonic in contemporary, ninth-century textual and intellectual culture. I do so in two stages. First I assess the potential Byzantine texts and contexts for the *VM*. I argue that whilst Byzantine sources are used in the text, as shown above, the way they are used is distinctly un-Byzantine, and more generally that the *VM*'s textual community appears to have lost touch with contemporary Byzantine textual and political culture. Second, I part with scholarly consensus which has tended to look eastwards, and argue that the *VM* is best considered as a Latinate text, both in genre and in intended audience. Unlike the previous chapter, the analysis here is not concerned with texts explicitly cited in the *VM*. Rather this chapter puts forward an argument *for* context, and more concretely for the kinds of texts I posit formed the discursive milieu of the Moravian textual community responsible for the *VM*. I argue that: in its form and content, the *VM* actively engages with the tradition of Latin missionary hagiography; its argument is formulated explicitly against Frankish arguments for administrative rule over Pannonia as formulated in the *Conversio*; and the text seeks to secure papal patronage, by forging, amending, and reinventing not only the legacy of Cyril and the alphabet, but also the historic relationship between the papacy and Moravian mission.

Whither Byzantium?

As is clear from the chapter so far, the *VM* does use Byzantine sources, like council synopses, and seeks to integrate Methodios into Byzantine administrative terminology, albeit in the vaguest possible sense. This strongly suggests the presence of Greek-language materials at the author's disposal. That Greek remained significant in Methodios' circle may also be attested by the medieval register of Reichenau Monastery. The monastery was visited by Methodios and his associates most probably on their way back to Moravia, after their release from Bavarian imprisonment sometime in 873.[1] The register for the ninth century records the names of

[1] F. V. Mareš, 'Die Namen Des Slavenapostels Methodius von Saloniki und seiner Gefährten im Verbrüderungsbuch des Reichenauer Klosters', *Cyrillomethodianum*, 1 (1971), p. 107.

Inventing Slavonic: Cultures of Writing between Rome and Constantinople. Mirela Ivanova, Oxford University Press.
 DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780198891505.003.0007

Methodios and five other companions written in Greek, in one majuscule hand: Methodios, Leon, Ignatios, Ioakin (sic), Symeon, and Dragais.[2] The script, known as upright ogival, resembles that in other dated ninth-century majuscule hands, such as the Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite manuscript in Paris at the French National Library, *Gr.*437, dated to the early ninth century, and displaying similar descenders on deltas and gammas.[3] If this is indeed our Methodios, which seems highly probable, then clearly there was still some use of and knowledge of Greek in the Methodian milieu. This leaves the possibility that Greek texts may have influenced or informed the *VM* and thus had an impact on its intended audience.

As noted in Chapter 5, the Byzantine nature of the *VM* as a hagiographical text has long been taken for granted. Most studies of the text also accept the significance of Byzantium as a political entity and its continued contact with the mission as portrayed in the *VM* and thus Byzantium's influence over the community that produced the text.[4] In this section, I seek to argue in turn that neither Byzantine episcopal hagiography nor the actual Byzantine political state can be seen as exerting any significant influence on the text. In fact, the *VM* marks a significant break with Byzantium, both with its literary models and in terms of contact with the political centre and its elite. The residual Greek of this trilingual milieu therefore, whilst it served the author by giving them access to materials to manipulate, whether these be ecumenical synopses or the *VC* itself, was no longer paired with the Byzantine imperialism of the *VC*.

In what follows, I situate the *VM* within contemporary episcopal hagiography in Byzantium. This comes in two sorts, contemporary lives of near-contemporary bishops, and medieval accounts of earlier missionary bishops. Neither seems to have any contact with or influence on the construction of Methodios as a bishop and saint in the latter, original half of the *VM*. Then I address the slightly more elusive question of whether or not the Byzantine political centre continued to have contact with the Moravian milieu when Methodios was made bishop. I argue that it did not, and that the vague portrayal of Byzantine imperial power in the

[2] '*ΜΕΘΟΔΙΟΣ*, *ΛΕΟΝ*, *ΙΓΝΑΤΙΟΣ*, *ΙΟΑΚΙΝ*, *ΣΥΜΕΟΝ*, *ΔΡΑΓΑΙΣ*', ibid. p. 108, Folio image found between p. 112 and p. 113, and available online: https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/de/zbz/Ms-Rhhist0027/40r-53 (last accessed: September 2023).

[3] Pseudo-Dionysius, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Gr.437, https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6000953x (last accessed: September 2023).

[4] This is the basic premise of Dvornik's appropriately titled *Byzantine Missions among the Slavs*, and likewise the guiding assumption of Obolensky's idea of a Byzantine Commonwealth. See F. Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions amongst the Slavs, SS Constantine and Methodius* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1970), e.g. p. 171; D. Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500–1453* (London, 1971), e.g. pp. 145–6; A. Vlasto, *The Entry of the Slavs into Christendom: An Introduction to the Medieval History of the Slavs* (Cambridge, 1970), pp. 9–12. This has been nuanced more recently as isolated periods of state sponsored mission. See: I. Ševčenko, 'Religious Missions Seen from Byzantium', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 12–13 (1988–9), pp. 7–27, at p. 11. And assessed even more critically by Sergei Ivanov, whose conclusions, I largely accept, and will discuss more below: S. Ivanov, 'Religious Missions', in J. Shepard, ed., *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 304–32; S. Ivanov, *'Pearls Before Swine'*.

VM is best understood not as an actual portrayal of a real emperor, but as a model of secular power to serve as a comparative critique of the immediate threat of Frankish political authority.

Byzantine Bishops and Their Hagiographies

There are two kinds of episcopal hagiographies in the literary culture of Middle Byzantium. The first is the near-contemporary, Middle-Byzantine bishop's *vita*. This genre was by no means the dominant kind of text produced in Middle Byzantium, even if recent work on Middle-Byzantine hagiography has somewhat nuanced the commonplace idea that all of the 'heroes of ninth-century hagiography were neither empresses nor ecclesiastical prelates but chiefly monastics and ascetics dwelling on Mt Olympos in Bithynia'.[5] It has become clear that, as Efthymiadis notes, a 'certain increase in bishops is also observable', in particular in the ninth and tenth centuries.[6] Thanks in large part to a recent publication of a collection of mostly previously unedited and unpublished lives of Middle-Byzantine saints from Greece, it is possible to review a corpus of contemporary Byzantine bishops in order to establish the kind of blueprint for such hagiography in and around the late ninth century.[7] These include the slightly more familiar Peter, Bishop of Argos (ca. 860–930) (*BHG* 1504) and Peter's own funerary oration for Athanasios, Bishop of Methone (ca. 825–99) (*BHG* 196), and the lesser-known and more poorly recorded saints Theokletos of Bishop of Lakedaimon (ca. 800–79) and Demetrianos, Bishop of Kythrea (ca. 829–913) (*BHG* 495).[8]

Broadly speaking, and Peter of Argos aside, these saints and their lives or funeral orations lack much of the richness or detail of their monastic contemporaries and near-contemporaries such as Ioannikios (ca. 762–846) (*BHG* 935), the aforementioned Efthymios the Younger (ca. 823–98) or Saint Luke (ca. 890–950) (*BHG* 994), to name but a few.[9] By contrast, some texts I have consulted are much harder

[5] S. Efthymiadis, 'Hagiography from the "Dark Age" to the Age of Symeon Metaphrastes', in his ed. *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, vol. 1 (Farnham, 2011), p. 110; E. A. Fisher, 'Introduction', to Ignatios the Deakon, *The Life of Patriarch Nikephoros I of Constantinople*, in A-M. Talbot, ed., *Byzantine Defenders of Images: Eight Saints' Lives in English Translation* (Washington, DC, 1998), p. 34.

[6] Efthymiadis, 'Hagiography from the "Dark Age"', p. 123.

[7] A. Kaldellis and I. Polemis, eds., trans., *Saints of Ninth and Tenth Century Greece* (Cambridge, MA, 2019). I am grateful to Professor Antony Kaldellis and the series editor Dr Alice-Mary Talbot, for letting me see the proofs of this volume prior to its publication.

[8] Theodore of Nicea, *The Life of Peter of Argos*, eds., trans. A. Kaldellis and I. Polemis, *Saints of Ninth and Tenth Century Greece*, pp. 117–62. Peter of Argos, *Funeral Oration for Athanasios of Methone*, in ibid., pp. 69–116. *The Life and Miracles of Theokletos of Lakedaimon* in ibid., pp. 163–256. *The Life of Demetrianos of Kythrea*, in H. Grégoire, ed., 'Saint Demetrianos, évêque de Chytri (île de Chypre)', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 16 (1907), pp. 204–40, at pp. 217–36 (text).

[9] *The Life of St Ioannikios*, in *Acta Sanctorum Novembris*, ed. J. van den Gheyn, vol. 2.1 (Brussels, 1894), pp. 384–435; trans. D. F. Sullivan, in ed. Talbot, *Byzantine Defenders of Images*, pp. 243–353;

to date including the *Life of Theokletos of Lakedaimon*, and in other cases the lifetimes of the bishops themselves remain hard to establish with precision. Thus, I have read these and their overall similarities as evidence of the kinds of tropes and topoi available, rather than any one specific potential model text for the *VM*.

The central elements of these episcopal texts are twofold. The first is the saints' reluctance to take office, often due to their previous asceticism.[10] The second is the authors' praise of the care the bishops took of their flock, thanks to their various Christian virtues. Amongst their virtues, there is a total lack of concern with conversion or missionary work. It is clearly not perceived as the duty of the bishop. To take but one example, the *Funeral Oration of Athanasios Bishop of Methone* was written sometime in the late ninth or early tenth century and was probably based on a lost life of the bishop. This is an exceptionally useful text as its author, Peter, Bishop of Argos, would in turn receive his own hagiography. Thus, this elaborate account of episcopal virtue is composed by someone who would in turn be considered episcopally virtuous.

In Peter's account Anastasius is praised primarily for the care of his community. He is commended for acquiring the 'four cardinal virtues, as well as those that follow upon them', and some abstract examples of his prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice are given.[11] He is then favourably compared to classical figures whom he did not resemble: 'he did not act like Zamolxis', 'he did not legislate as Minos did'.[12] In turn, he is compared to all those biblical figures he did follow and resemble, as 'his teaching was sowed into the earth of those who listened and looked at him'.[13] His hospitality resembled Abraham, he 'imitated David's forbearance and pity', his 'ardour for preaching the Gospel' resembled the disciples.[14] There is no indication in the text as a whole, and its twofold comparison of Athanasios, that the act of converting rather than the act of maintaining and strengthening the faith of a flock, was a necessity for a virtuous bishop. The same general themes are reiterated in the shorter account of the *Life and Miracles of Theokletos, Bishop of Lakedaimon*, who probably died around the year 879; he is praised for his faith, generosity and moderation before his miracles are recounted,

The Life of Efthymios the Younger, eds., trans. A-M. Talbot and R. P. H. Greenfield, *Holy Men of Mount Athos* (Washington, DC, 2016), pp. 1–126; *The Life and Miracles of Saint Luke of Steiris: Text, Translation and Commentary*, eds., trans. C. L. Connor and W. Connor (Brookline, MA, 1994).

[10] See, e.g., *Life of Demetrianos of Kythrea*, pp. 228–30; *Life and Miracles of Theokletos*, 4.2, 5; Theodore of Nicaea, *Life of Peter of Argos*, 6.1.

[11] '*Τὰς μὲν οὖν γενικὰς οὕτω κατώρθωσεν ἀρετὰς καὶ σὺν αὐταῖς τὰς ἑπομένας αὐταῖς*', Peter of Argos, *Funeral Oration for Athanasios*, 7.1.

[12] '*οὐ καθάπερ Ζάμολξις*', '*οὐ Μίνως Κρήταις νόμους ἐνθείς*', ibid., 8.1.

[13] '*ὁ διδασκαλικὸς λόγος διὰ τῆς ἀρίστης πράξεως ἐν τῇ τῶν ἀκουόντων καὶ ὁρώντων κατασπειρόμενος γῇ*', ibid., 8.2.

[14] '*Ἐζήλωσε καὶ Δαυὶδ τὸ ἀνεξίκακον καὶ φιλόθεον*', '*τὸ σύντονον ἐν τῷ τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου κηρύγματι*', ibid., Abraham: 9.1, David: 9.2, Gospel: 10.1.

and in the rather elaborate description of the *Life of Demetrianos of Kythrea*, which also commends the former ascetic for his generosity, care, and healing.[15]

It was not the case however that conversion work was simply unnecessary in Middle Byzantium. That there were many heathens left to convert is made clear by the texts themselves, which reveal occasional acts of conversion. The *Life of Peter of Argos*, for instance, presents conversions as the indirect consequence of another of his pastoral virtues, namely generosity. The *Life* discusses a terrible famine in the Peloponnese, which led to the reserves of flour running out.[16] Peter performs a miracle ensuring that the last jar suffices to feed everyone.

> *Ταῦτα θρυλλούμενα σχεδὸν ἀνὰ τὴν ὑπ᾽ οὐρανόν, ὑπηγάγετο καὶ βαρβάρους, οἳ κατὰ κλέος τῆς αὐτοῦ ἀρετῆς ἀφικνούμενοι, ἐξώμνυντο μὲν τὰ πάτρια καὶ τὴν ἐκ προγόνων θρησκείαν, τῇ δὲ ἡμετέρᾳ μετετάττοντο καθαιρόμενοι καὶ μεταπλαττόμενοι τῷ θείῳ λουτρῷ.*[17]
>
> These stories spread almost throughout the whole world and attracted even some barbarians to him. They came because of the fame of his virtue, and they foreswore their own customs and ancestral faith and embraced our own, having been cleansed and transformed through holy baptism.[18]

Peter's virtues drove people to conversion. He himself, however, did little but tend to his flock. In short, there is little one can find in the formal genre of episcopal hagiography in the Middle-Byzantine period which seems to have influenced the part of the *VM* dealing with Methodios' time in office. Methodios does initially reject a bishopric when it is offered by the emperor.[19] In this early section of the *VM* he is perhaps most in line with his Byzantine contemporaries. But there is no protest by Methodios when the pope appoints him bishop, nor is there any discussion of his pastoral virtues after his appointment. Rather, the narrative becomes so interspersed with the various challenges Methodios faces, that aside from three small instances of his prophetic abilities, the text essentially does not talk about what Methodios actually *did* in office, rather than who did or did not support him. The *VM*'s concerns, therefore, are far removed from the concerns of a Middle-Byzantine episcopal hagiographer.

It is not that mission was not a matter of concern, dispute, and consideration in Byzantium, however, as discussed in the first three chapters of this book. Missionary episcopal hagiography does survive in Middle Byzantium, but as a very particular and archaising genre. Missionary bishops appear as the ancient subjects of long, novelistic, and often largely mythical hagiographic texts. These kinds of texts are much harder to date, but at least three existed or were composed

[15] *Life and Miracles of Theokletos*, 7.1. Miracles: 13–15; *Life of Demetrianos*, pp. 231–2.
[16] Theodore of Nicaea, *Life of Peter of Argos*, 8.1–2. [17] Ibid., 9.1.
[18] Ibid. [19] *VM*, 4.6.

in or around the ninth and tenth centuries. The *Life of Saint Pankratios of Taormina* recalls the story of Pankratios sent by apostle Peter himself to evangelise Sicily and must have been written locally in Sicily but found its way to Constantinople in the late eighth century, and certainly before 814.[20] At 250 pages of Greek in its modern edition and double that with its translation, the account is full of inconsistencies and clearly significantly post-dates the events it discusses.[21] This kind of later, elaborated, and often misinformed engagement with late antique missionary activity is also evident in the aforementioned *Life of Apostle Andrew* by the monk Epiphanios who decided to follow the apostle's footsteps, albeit at times dramatically diverging from Andrew's route.[22] As, Stallman-Pacitti notes, Epiphanios clearly knew the *Life of Pankratios* and is one source for its *terminus ante quem*.[23] Last but not least, *Life of St Gregentios of Taphar,* most likely compiled sometime in the tenth century at over a hundred and ten pages of Greek in its modern edition, narrates a largely imagined fifth-century mission to Yemen by Bishop Gregentios.[24] These dramatic missions of yesteryear, however, whilst at times intertextually connected with one another, seem to have never interacted with the expectations placed upon contemporary run-of-the-mill Byzantine bishops. Amidst this novelistic subgenre, the *VM*'s account of Frankish captivity, papal, and imperial confirmation appears rather alien, with its political immediacy, terseness, and lack of preoccupation with miraculous deeds.

Thus, the more one explores the nature of Middle-Byzantine hagiography, the more misplaced appears the truism that the *VM* must be considered a Byzantine work together with the *VC*. It is clear that if one were to try to explain or situate the *VM* as a hagiographic monument, one has to look away from Byzantine literary production.

The Byzantine State in the VM

As noted at the start of this chapter, it is often, albeit not universally, accepted that the Byzantine state maintained some contact with the Moravian mission after Cyril's death. This is largely based on one vague passage in the text, recording a visit Methodios made to Byzantium late in his career upon the invitation of an unnamed emperor. However, both in this passage and the rest of the *VM* as a text,

[20] *Life of Saint Pankratios of Taormina: Greek Text, English Translation and Commentary*, trans. C.J. Stallman-Pacitti, ed. J. B. Burke (Leiden, 2018), pp. 2–3.

[21] Ibid., pp. 11–16.

[22] *Life of Apostle Andrew*, in *Grecheskie predaniia o apostole Andre*, vol. 1: Zhitiia, ed. A. Vinogradov (St Petersburg, 2005).

[23] *Life of Saint Pankratios of Taormina*, p. 11.

[24] *Life of Gregentios of Taphar*, in *The Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar: Introduction, Critical Edition and Translation*, ed. A. Berger (Berlin, 2006), pp. 188–410.

the reality of the Byzantine imperial centre and its elite appear very far away. Rather, what remains of Byzantine imperial power is a mythical antithesis to the secular Frankish king, who unlike the emperor (as presented in the *VM*) consistently disobeys the pope.

As noted earlier, the author of the *VM* omits specific Byzantine terminology found in the *VC* such as the administrative title of Cyril and Methodios' father. This titular specificity is replaced by the vague assertion that Methodios 'was not of a simple, but from both [parents] of a good and honourable family'.[25] Meanwhile, in the *VC* the Khazarian mission is framed as an explicit imperial venture. The emperor tells Cyril that if he wishes to go alone he would do well, 'but knowing the imperial ("tsarskuiu") country and honour, go honourably with imperial help'.[26] This imperial pride is omitted in the *VM*, where the emperor does not speak at all. The narrative simply notes he sent the philosopher and his brother.[27] The silencing of the imperial nature of diplomacy and missionary work is done most explicitly with Moravia. In the *VM*, the Moravian rulers specifically ask for Slavonic speakers and not Greeks, and the emperor turns to the brothers due to their non-Greek-ness, noting that in Thessaloniki they speak Slavonic.[28] This stands in stark contrast with the aforementioned elevation of the Byzantine state in the *VC*, where Rastislav asks Michael, because 'it is from you that good law is given to all the regions'.[29]

Some of these omissions could be accidental, or simply the product of the general shortening of the *VC* text in its *VM* retelling. However, the consistency with which they occur strongly suggests an intentional erosion of the Byzantine imperial agenda found in the *VC*. Aside from one mention of the name Michael, no names, of parents, emperors, Constantinopolitan teachers, or other companions are noted in the *VM*, nor is there any geographic specificity or description of the route to Khazaria. Even the word 'Constantinople' is nowhere to be seen even though the *VC* makes clear that Cyril spends plenty of time there and that in the *VM*'s story, Methodios visiting the emperor would necessitate a visit to Constantinople.[30] In many ways, Byzantium and its eastern neighbours, so central to the *VC*, feel very far away in the *VM*.

The *VM* remains a messier document than the *VC*, however, because despite diminishing the essential 'Byzantine-ness' of the emperor and missionary activities as seen in the *VC*, imperial power as a concept is crucial in the *VM* narrative. So, what of the imperial power in the council synopses? The emperor in this opening section, as noted above, is constructed and then utilised in the *VM* as an inheritor of the Christian prophets and saints, and subsequently as reliable assistant to the formation of Christian orthodoxy, and to the pope.

[25] 'бѣ же рода не хоудда отъ обоюдоу, нь вельми добра и чьстьна', *VM*, 2.4.
[26] 'нъ царьскꙋю дрьжавꙋ вѣды и чьсть, чьстьно иди съ царскою помощию', *VC*, 8.9.
[27] 'посъла цѣсаръ по философа брата его во козары', *VM*, 4.1.
[28] ibid., 5.1–8. [29] *VC*, 14.5. [30] *VM*, 13.

I suggest that this emperor, found in the *VM*, is not *that* emperor, the Byzantine emperor, self-acclaimed inheritor of Roman territory and Hellenistic learning, found in the *VC*, nor is he intended to represent the actual emperor on the ninth-century Constantinopolitan throne. Rather, what we are left with in the *VM* is an abstracted, almost mythological imperial hand, which operates at a distance but unequivocally supports the Methodian mission, in ways that, as the *VM* is keen to stress, completely align with papal jurisdiction. This ideal emperor, or ideal secular ruler, serves a key purpose to be contrasted with the much more immediately felt secular power on the Moravian doorstep, namely the Frankish king or, as the *VM* calls him the 'enemy of the Moravians'.

As noted above, the *VM* uses a letter by Pope Hadrian II to assert that, while they were the emperor's messengers, Cyril and Methodios recognised that Moravia did not disobey papal canons before heading to Rome.[31] By contrast, the Frankish king 'together with all [his] bishops' claims that Methodios is 'teaching on our land'.[32] Methodios argues this is the land of St Peter, but the king and his bishops are unmoved and they imprison him for two and a half years. The pope intervenes, forbidding 'all the king's bishops' from serving mass until they release him.[33] In the *VM* the emperor does right by the pope whereas the Frankish king does not. In the *VC* we see no evidence of Cyril or his imperial patron rushing to appease Rome.

The *VM* presents the Frankish king and his bishops, both of whom disobey papal authority, as the anti-power to the pope and emperor, as presented in the ecumenical councils at the start of the text. The same 'they', referring to the king and his bishops, recurs in the text as an amorphous group trying to challenge Methodios. After his initial arrest, noted above, they are refuted by the pope. A second challenge is posed and a papal letter once again affirms that Methodios is legitimate.[34] Immediately after this, the unspecified 'they', presumably the king and his bishops again, claim that 'the [Byzantine] emperor is angry with him [Methodios], and if he were to find him, he would not have his life'.[35] To refute this, the text notes that the emperor, unnamed, writes to Methodios expressing a desire to see him. Upon his arrival, presumably in Constantinople, the text notes:

> абиѥ же шьдъщю ѥмоу тамо приятъ и съ чьстью цѣсарь великою и радостью и оучение ѥго похваль, оудьрьжа оть оученикъ ѥго попа и дзякона съ книгами. Вьсю волю ѥго сътвори ѥлико хотѣ и не ослоушавъ ни о чьсомьже[36], облюбль и одарь вельми проводи и пакы славьно до своѥго стола. Тако же и патриархъ[37]

[31] Ibid., 8.4–11. [32] 'нь съ вьсѣми епископи, яко "на нашеи области оучиши"', ibid., 9.1.
[33] 'вьси королѥви епископи', ibid., 10.1. [34] Ibid., 12.5.
[35] 'цѣсарь сѧ на нь гнѣвать, да аще и обращеть, нѣсть ѥмоу живота имѣти', ibid., 13.1.
[36] A slightly peculiar phrase. The critical apparatus of Grivec and Tomšič's edition suggests the meaning to be a variation on the previous phrase: 'imperator ei de omnibus credidit' ('the emperor trusted him on all matters'). This seems to make most sense. *Constantinus et Methodius*, eds. Grivec and Tomšič, p. 163, n.11.
[37] *VM*, 13.1–6.

> And immediately he [the emperor] received him who had come, and the emperor praised his teaching with great honour and joy, and he took a priest and a deacon with books from his [Methodios'] students. He carried out all his desires and did not disobey him concerning anything, and he embraced him and gave him many presents, and once again, he gloriously sent him to his throne. And likewise, the patriarch.

Studies of the text often discuss this affair as an authentic historical event, in line with a general assumption that the Byzantine state was in contact with the Moravian mission. They insert the names of emperor Basil I and Patriarch Photios, and date it to ca. 880, prior to a trip Methodios makes to Rome which is recorded in papal letters.[38]

As already argued by Sergei Ivanov, however, there is little evidence of a consistent and coherent imperial missionary ideology in ninth-century Byzantium.[39] Rather, as I have sought to show in Chapter 3, mission was a matter of serious intellectual contention. Moreover, not a word of the Moravian mission survives in Greek-language texts. Were it not for this vague passage, it would be easy to assume that certainly by the time Methodios was appointed by the pope, if not before, the Byzantine state apparatus was not interested or involved in the region. No protest is made after Methodios' successors are expelled, and presumably the Latin rite is reintroduced.[40]

As Ivanov has demonstrated, a much clearer imperially sponsored missionary agenda can be discerned by the early to mid-tenth century, not least with the mission to Alania sponsored by the Patriarch Nicholas Mystikos.[41] This agenda is evident also in the representation of emperors, whose missionary prowess starts to be highly commended. In his tenth-century biography, the *Vita Basili*, the ninth-century emperor Basil I is praised profusely for converting the Slavs of the Western Balkans.[42] It is this tenth-century image of Basil, and conception of missionary work more generally, that informs Dvornik and Obolensky's imposition of Basil as a historical figure upon the *VM* text. Yet, credited though Basil is with the conversion of Slavs in the Western Balkans, there is no mention of Moravia or Methodios in the *Vita Basili*. Had such an event occurred, I see no reason why it would not have been a perfect addition to the narrative of the tenth-century hagio-biographer.

[38] E.g. Istrin, *1001 let slavianskoi pismenosti* (3rd ed., Moscow, 2010), p. 42; Grivec, *Slovanska Apostola*, pp. 67–8; Vlasto, *Entry of Slavs*, pp. 76–7; Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions*, p. 171; Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth*, pp. 145–6.

[39] Ivanov, '*Pearls before Swine*', p. 92.

[40] Also noted in ibid.

[41] Ibid., pp. 107–27.

[42] Ibid., pp. 103–6. Theophanes Continuatus, *Vita Basilli*, in *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati nomine fertur liber quo vita Basilii imperatoris aplectitur*, ed., trans. I. Ševčenko (Berlin, 2011), 54. Some of the Slavs of the Western Balkans are coincidentally twice converted in another text associated with Constantine Porophyrogenitus' circle, first by Heraklios and then by Basil: Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *De administrando Imperio*, 31 (Heraklios), 29 (Basil).

With all this in mind, and as discussed in the Introduction, the high political is not always the best context to consider when trying to understand the meanings of texts. Rather, the account of the *VM* is better explained within rather than without the text. First and foremost, one cannot ignore its banality and vagueness. The emperor gave Methodios everything, he obeyed him, he gave him presents, he sent him home. Neither emperor, nor patriarch, who seems to come to the author as an afterthought, are named. Yet, the *VM*'s portrayal of the emperor is once again in line with the author's presentation of imperial secular authority as the ideal subordinate to papal authority, and as the antithesis of Frankish political authority.

It is by no means accidental that the whole visit to the Byzantine emperor is introduced by an accusation from the Frankish opposition, the elusive 'they' which stands in for the king and his bishops. As noted thus far, the Frankish king and his bishops are painted as an enemy to Moravia in the *VM*, constantly challenging and questioning Methodios' position. The pope and emperor, on the other hand, are established from the outset as the only sources of legitimate authority, constantly available to refute challenges. This brief account of imperial support after Frankish challenge, comes immediately after a more substantial account of papal support in response to another episode of Frankish hostility.[43]

The image of imperial power in the *VM*, therefore, is abstract and distant, but appears conveniently only to reassert its unequivocal support for Methodios, in harmony with the pope. The model, as set up in the initial account of ecumenical councils, in which the emperor agrees with the pope, is never broken in the *VM*. This is an incredibly simplified image of Byzantine–papal relations in the late ninth century, which were in fact riddled with conflicts over the jurisdiction of Bulgaria and ordination of Patriarch Photios.[44] Thus, the *VM*'s formulation of imperial power is made entirely in refutation of a more local, real, and threatening secular authority found in the Frankish kingdom.

But this is by no means to suggest that Moravia shows no signs of contact with Byzantium, in perhaps less formalised or centralised ways. Recent archaeological work has demonstrated that the lands associated with Great Moravia, across modern-day Hungary, Austria, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia reveal a mixed material culture with influences considered 'Western', Carolingian, or other, but also 'Eastern', or Byzantine.[45] For instance, in the early period of Christianisation, the eighth to early ninth centuries, burial archaeology reveals men wearing late Avar, or early Carolingian, belts and Viking-style axes. Yet we find women

[43] *VM*, 12.

[44] See: L. Simeonova, *Diplomacy of the Letter and the Cross: Photios, Bulgaria, and the Papacy, 860s–880s* (Amsterdam, 1998).

[45] See, e.g, as well as a number of other individual site summaries in the volume: H. Herold, 'Gars-Thunau, Austria', in P. Kouřil, ed., *Great Moravia and the Beginnings of Christianity* (Brno, 2014), pp. 233–9.

decorating themselves with gold and silver rings and buttons which have been named 'Byzantine-oriental jewellery' or jewellery of the Veligrad or Staré Město type.[46] Glass object finds from throughout the ninth century reveal a similar cultural crossroads, with some items, like funnels and globular beakers, showing contact with the Carolingians, but others such as fragments of lamps were made from the basic type of Byzantine glass.[47]

Perhaps less surprisingly, the material culture of religions points to the same. Whilst Poláček has stressed that recent archaeological work has led to the re-dating to the late ninth century of a large number of churches in Mikulčice which were originally thought to be pre-mission, Galuška identifies at least four churches which already stood before the Cyrillo-Methodian mission.[48] Even at these earlier sites, commingling is clear: a small lead cross pendant with a picture of Christ and a Greek liturgical inscription on the obverse was found in a grave at Uherské Hradiště, which is considered to be an earlier Christian site.[49]

However, such materials are neither reducible to the Moravian mission alone, nor to centralised imperially guided interactions. It is highly likely that contact and exchange persisted between people, pilgrims, and merchants. But they do not necessarily offer any insight into whether this Moravian milieu and the Greek sources available to it, continued to maintain active contact with Byzantium, as a polity and its political, intellectual, and literate cultures. As I have sought to show, it seems most likely that it did not. While Greek clearly remained present and known in the milieu from which this text emerges, there was a significant discontinuity in knowledge about and contact with, firstly, Byzantine literary models and conventions, and secondly, with the Byzantine imperial elite. In what follows, I argue for a Latinate model for the *VM* as a hagiography, and a Latin-language text as its intended opponent.

Latin Hagiography and Missionary Thought

This section posits that Western textual models and intellectual contexts best explain the *VM* as a text. It no longer deals with texts that are cited or referred to explicitly in the *VM*. Rather it moves on to the second and third types of

[46] L. Galuška, 'Christianity in the Period of Byzantine Mission and the Archbishopric of Methodios on the Basis of Archaeological Sources in the Area of Veligrad—Staré Město and Uherské Hradiště', in P. Kouřil, ed., *The Cyril and Methodius Mission and Europe: 1150 Years Since the Arrival of the Thessaloniki Brothers in Great Moravia* (Brno, 2014), pp.74–86, at p. 75.

[47] L. Galuška et al., 'The Glass of Great Moravia: Vessel and Window Glass, and Small Objects', *Journal of Glass Studies*, 54 (2012), pp. 61–92.

[48] Galuška, 'Christianity in the Period of Byzantine Mission', pp. 76–7; L. Poláček, 'Great Moravian Sacral Architecture: New Research, New Questions', in Kouřil, ed., *The Cyril and Methodius Mission and Europe*, p. 71.

[49] Galuška, 'Christianity in the Period of Byzantine Mission', Fig. 6.

contextualisation carried out in this monograph: what I refer to in the Introduction as the generic, and the intellectual and intertextual. As discussed in the Introduction, the purpose of these contextualisations is to offer insight, on the one hand, into the author and textual community which produced the text and, on the other, into the discursive milieu which the *VM* sought to influence. Firstly, I break new ground in seeking to firmly situate the *VM* in the corpus of Latin episcopal hagiography. To do so, I offer some summative remarks on the formal qualities of Latin missionary hagiography, before situating the *VM* within this corpus to illuminate the particular approach the author of the *VM* takes to structure authority. This completes my generic analysis.

Secondly, I turn to the intellectual and intertextual context at hand. Whilst few studies have considered placing the *VM* in the context of Latin hagiography, recognising that Frankish and papal politics influenced the shape of the text is scholarly common-sense, and has become ever more prominent in recent years.[50] This remains a textual study, however, so it is less interested in establishing the reliability of the *VM*, and more concerned with what the author of the *VM* was trying to do with their text, and how they sought to affect their sociopolitical environment.

The Latin church's tradition of hagiography in the early medieval period was thriving. Walter Berschin has listed two hundred texts dating to the Carolingian period, ca. 750–920, of which 155 are biographies or martyrdoms.[51] Missionary saints were a particular focus. Ian Wood's study of missionary lives notes twenty-one *vitae* more or less explicitly concerned with missionary activity or conversion, and in almost all cases focused on bishops, all dated to the eighth and ninth centuries.[52] Wood's major study does not give the *VM* the same kind of hagiographical treatment as his Latin corpus; however, elsewhere in his work he does make clear the need to add 'to the Latin texts […] that of Methodios'.[53] This is what this study seeks to achieve, and it welcomes other more recent attempts to situate Methodios in the Latinate world.[54]

[50] The papal political context was already considered central in: V. Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy Konstantina a Metoděje* (Prague, 1963), p. 86; Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions*, pp. 131–59; Simeonova, *Diplomacy of the Letter and the Cross*, pp. 272, 296–318; B. Floria, *Skazaniia o nachale slavianskoi pis'mennosti* (2nd ed., St Petersburg, 2000), pp. 54–7. But Betti's is one of the first studies to look at the mission from the papal court, *The Making of Christian Moravia (858–882): Papal Power and Political Reality* (Leiden, 2014). This is in line with a general trend mentioned in the Introduction to look westward and integrate Moravia and Pannonia into Frankish/Carolingian and therefore 'European' politics, both in recent Czech and in recent Croatian scholarship.

[51] K. Gibson, 'The Carolingian World through Hagiography', *History Compass*, 13–12 (2015), pp. 630–45, at p. 630.

[52] For a table with all the relevant saints' and authors' names, dates and locations, see: I. Wood, *The Missionary Life: Saints and the Evangelisation of Europe 400–1050* (Harlow, 2001), p. 52. For a more recent general overview of hagiography in this period see: J. Palmer, *Early Medieval Hagiography* (Leeds, 2018).

[53] I. Wood, 'The Latin Hagiography of Mission from Rimbert to Bruno of Querfurt', in Kouřil, ed., *The Cyril and Methodius Mission and Europe*, p. 35.

[54] For instance: J. Kabala, '"Trampling the Old Laws": Traces of Papal Latinity in the Old Slavonic Vita Methodii', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 76 (2022), pp. 69–100.

Rather than a sustained study of the whole Latinate missionary corpus, this section seeks to point out some of its general characteristics. I do not intend, however, to give this corpus a 'spurious uniformity', nor to obscure the localised hagiographic traditions of particular regions, like Brittany, or the localised purposes of particular texts like the *Life of Anskar*.[55] Rather, some schematic outlines will help illustrate how different the Latin tradition was from its Byzantine contemporary, and how this may offer a much better context for the composition of the *VM*.

The Latin-language hagiography of mission had some interest in revisiting historic figures, but the periods in-between saint and text were generally much shorter. Alcuin writes a *Life of Willibrord* (ca. 658–739), in ca. 796.[56] The anonymous *Life of Willehad* who died in ca. 789 was written between 840 and 855.[57] Moreover, there was an active production of lives of contemporary figures, within a generation of two of their deaths. Willibald's *Life of Boniface* was written ca. 768, not long after the saint's death in ca. 754 and Huneburg of Heidenheim's *Hodoeporikon of Saint Willibald* was written sometime before 786, when Willibald, her brother, was still alive.[58] Rimbert's *Life of Anskar*, composed nearly contemporaneously with the *VM*, was written almost immediately upon, perhaps several months after, the saint's death in 865 but certainly before Rimbert's death in 876.[59]

Thus, the Latinate world produced plenty of episcopal missionary hagiography. But this corpus was also deeply intertwined, both intertextually and interpersonally. On the one hand, the saints themselves saints were either related, as in the case of Hugeburg's brothers Willibald and Wynnebald, or are said to have known each other, as a large number of them came from England (e.g. Boniface, Willibrord, Willehad) and went to Frisia or Saxony, aware of the legacy of others. On the other hand, the texts commemorating them are clearly aware of and using

[55] I. Wood, 'The Use and Abuse of Latin Hagiography in the Medieval West', in E. Chrysos et al., eds., *East and West: Modes of Communication, Proceedings of the First Plenary Conference at Merida* (Leiden, 1999), pp. 93–109, at p. 99; J. Smith, 'Oral and Written: Saints, Miracles, and Relics in Brittany, c.850–1250', *Speculum*, 65 (1990), pp. 309–43, esp. pp. 315–16.

[56] Alcuin, *The Life of Willibrord*, in *Vita Willibrordi, archiepiscopi Traiectensis*, ed. W. Levison, in *MHG, Scriptores rerum Merowingicarum*, 7 (Hanover, 1920), pp. 81–141; Alcuin, *Life of Willibrord*, trans. C. Talbot, in *SC*, pp. 189–211.

[57] *The Life of Willehad*, in *Das Leben des hl. Willehad, Bischof von Bremen, und die Beschreibung der Wunder an seinem Grabe*, ed. A. Röpke (Bremen, 1982); *Life of Willehad*, trans. P. Potter and T. Noble, in *SC*, pp. 281–91.

[58] Wood, *The Missionary Life*, pp. 61–5; Willibald, *The Life of Boniface*, in *Vita Bonifatii auctore Willibaldo*, ed. W. Levison, *MGH, Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum in Usum Scholarum*, *Vitae Sancti Bonifatii Archiepiscopi Moguntini* (Hanover, 1905), pp. 1–58; Willibald, *Life of Boniface*, trans. C. Talbot, in *SC*, pp. 107–40; Huneberc of Heidenheim, *The Life of Willibald*, in *Vita Willibaldi episcopi Eischstetensis et vita Wynnebaldi abbatis Heidenheimensis auctore sanctimoniale Heidenheimensis*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, *MGH*, *Scriptores*, vol. 15.1 (Hanover, 1887), pp. 80–117; Huneberc of Heidenheim, *The Hodoeporicon of Saint Willibald*, trans. C. Talbot, in *SC*, pp. 141–64.

[59] Wood, *The Missionary Life*, p. 125. Rimbert, *The Life of Anksar*, in *Quellen des 9. und 11. Jahrhunderts zur Geschichte der Hamburgischen Kirche und der Reiches*, ed. W. Trillmich (Darmstadt, 1961), pp. 16–133; *Anskar, Apostle of the North, 801–865*, trans. C. H. Robinson (London, 1921).

other *vitae* from the corpus. As illustrated in a diagram by Wood, this produces a deeply interconnected body of texts, concentrated in three clusters: the Bonifatian, hence, for instance, the *Life of Boniface* being used in the *Life of Willibald*; the Willibrordian, as for instance the *Life of Willibrord* being used by the *Life of Willehad*; and the Anskarian, with the *Life of Anskar* being used in the *Life of Rimbert* his hagiographer and successor.[60] Regardless of the saint's background, the texts were written not in England or Rome, but either in the north of the Frankish territories, like Münster and Bremen, in the centre, like Mainz, Würzburg, Fulda and Heidenheim, or the east, in places like Freising and Salzburg.[61]

With this kind of broad structural outline at hand, the similarities with the *VM* appear rather striking. A foreign saint, not native to the land they are assigned, arrives from afar with some papal approval and wavering cooperation from the local rulers to tend to the conversion of the people. This description is more or less true, despite the particularities of each text, of Boniface, Willibrord, Willehad, Anskar, and Methodios. Boniface from Wessex, and Willibrord and Willehad from Northumbria, all arrived initially in Frisia and then moved on to other parts from central Germany. Anskar from Corbie, near Amiens, was sent to Denmark and Sweden. Methodios, albeit from the east, was sent from Thessaloniki or Bithynia to the lands of the Moravians.

When considered alongside the *VM* the intertextuality of the Latin corpus is also rather striking, especially in the direct use and reintegration of hagiographical material related to a saint's predecessor. Scholars have never questioned why it is that the *VM* uses the *VC*, simply assuming that it was the case that Methodios was present in Cyril's missions. But, as I have sought to demonstrate, in the *VM* Methodios is in fact inserted quite disruptively into the material of the *VC*, where he is almost absent. This raises the question: why did the author turn to a pre-existing life, and use the *VC* text as a starting point, stressing the unity between Cyril and Methodios?

This kind of intertextual continuity was much less usual in the relevant Byzantine hagiographical corpus reviewed. The only comparable example from the Middle-Byzantine period is the *Life of Joseph the Hymnographer*, an ascetic saint, which mentions his connection with his saintly mentor Gregory of Dekapolis.[62] In an episcopal context, even when scholars suggest that the episcopal hagiographies such as that of Theokletos of Lakedaimon, are written later by a bishop seeking to honour a predecessor on the episcopal throne, the text itself starts and stops with the life of the bishop, not with the see more generally.[63] More often than not Byzantine saints and bishops in particular seem to source their legitimacy from their own actions alone.

[60] Wood, *The Missionary Life*, p. 53. [61] For a table with all locations: ibid. p. 52.

[62] *Life of Joseph the Hymnographer*, in *Sbornik grecheskikh i latinskikh pamiatnikov, kasaiushtikhsia Fotiia patriarkha*, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus (St Petersburg, 1901), 5–6.

[63] *Life of Theokletos of Lakedaimon*.

To the contrary, the Latin texts reviewed here commonly stress continuity and connection through use of existing hagiographies of worthy predecessors. As Wood notes, the *Life of Rimbert* (865–76), Eigil's *Life of Sturm* (ca. 794–800) and Liudger's *Life of Gregory* (786/800–4) are all 'as concerned with the master as with his pupil', but the lives of Willibald and Willehad, too, regularly feature the figure of Boniface and stress knowledge and continuation of his work.[64] The former, in particular, makes much of Rimbert's relationship to Anskar, whose *vita* he wrote. It stresses that upon noticing him and his learning, 'immediately, the great bishop [Anskar] established him to be an indivisible companion of his mission'.[65] And later, that 'they had one heart, one soul, one spirit, one faith always'.[66] This sentiment is not a world away from the oxen metaphor utilised by the *VM*.

The use of a saint as a predecessor to make claims to sanctity is not dissimilar from what the *VM* does with the *VC*. Taking Cyril, as the first man the emperor sends to Moravia, the author both inserts Methodios and distributes Cyril's work to him, but he also has Cyril stress that the two brothers were 'carrying one yoke'. It is perfectly possible that the decision to start from the *VC* when composing the *VM* was as much informed by the models of contemporary hagiography in Latin available at the Moravian bishopric, as by the political circumstances which made Cyril a good person with whom to affiliate Methodios. I will return to the particular political reasons why the author may have sought to strengthen a connection with Cyril in the latter part of this chapter.

The Pope in Latin Hagiography

The Latin corpus, although interconnected, is not static. There was clear change over time amongst these texts and their concerns.[67] In particular, the corpus reveals changing relationships between the papacy, Frankish secular and ecclesiastical authority, and the missionaries themselves, and these are crucial to better situating the *VM* as a text.

In what follows, I demonstrate how early Anglo-Frankish missionary hagiography gave a prominent role to the papacy in missionary work, albeit always in harmony with local and in particular Frankish political authority. This underwent a change during the ninth century, as noted by Conrad Leyser, when Frankish

[64] Ibid. p. 134. *The Life of Rimbert* in *Vita Rimbertii*, ed. G. Waitz, *MGH*, *Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum*, 55 (Hanover, 1884); Eigil, *The Life of Sturm*, in *Die Vita Sturmi des Eigil von Fulda: literarkritisch-historische Untersuchung und Edition*, ed. P. Engelbert (Rome, 1968); Eigil, *The Life of Saint Sturm*, trans. C. H. Talbot, in *SC*, pp. 165–87; *The Life of Willehad*.

[65] 'mox eum domnus episcopus indivisiblem suae legationis comitem esse constituit', *Life of Rimbert*, 5.

[66] 'cor unum et anima una, unus spiritus et una fides erat semper in eis', ibid., 9.

[67] Wood notes for instance, the decline of Scandinavian missionary hagiography at the end of the ninth century. *The Missionary Life*, pp. 136–7.

churchmen and women started to make pronounced use of the *Register* of Pope Gregory the Great and assume leadership in missionary activity.[68] I show that the Frankish polity's claims to be carrying out the work of Pope Gregory also manifest themselves in the hagiography of the ninth century, where missionary work is led by local rulers and only supported by the papacy. The ninth century, as Leyser notes, also saw a papal response, culminating in the commissioning of *Life of Gregory* by Pope John VIII.[69] This response too, I seek to argue, was profoundly hagiographical. It is in the context of these changes and opposing camps of missionary ideology that we can best situate the *VM* as a text, and its choice of genre and allegiance.

The *Life of Boniface* by Willibrord was written at the request of Bishop Lull and in the context of particular local diocesan politics between Mainz and Fulda, rather than in the context of grand mission.[70] Nonetheless, the pope is a crucial source of authority. The saint first arrives in Frisia at a time of quarrel between the Frisian and Frankish king; this results in the rebuilding of shrines and Boniface's return home.[71] His second trip is directly sanctioned by Rome, which he visits on pilgrimage, speaks with Gregory II and is later asked to make a 'report on the savage people of Germany' concerning 'whether the untilled fields of their hearts were ready to receive the seed of preaching'.[72] He then turns down an offer of episcopal office by Willibrord, but later accepts one from Rome as 'he dared not contradict so great a pontiff sitting on the apostolic see'.[73] This leads to his ordination to a bishopric without a see.[74] The pope permeates the *Life of Boniface*, with a specific section devoted to the succession of Gregory III, and the insistence that much like Gregory II, this pope too offered his vocal support for Boniface.[75] Secular Frankish rule in contrast is supportive, whether that be Charles or Carloman, but at times its politics can be obtrusive, as in the case of the quarrel between Charles and Radbod.[76] It is the pope who puts Boniface under 'the protection and devotion' ('munime ac devotione') of Charles, even if in reality his activity was probably just as much tied to kings; during the Carolingian church synods, the *Life* stresses, Boniface remained a 'legate of the Roman church and the apostolic see'.[77]

[68] C. Leyser, 'The Memory of Gregory the Great and the Making of Latin Europe, 600–1000', in K. Cooper and C. Leyser, eds., *Making Early Medieval Societies: Conflict and Belonging in the Latin West, 300–1200* (Cambridge, 2016), pp. 181–201, at pp. 182–5.

[69] Ibid., pp. 187, 191–2.

[70] J. Palmer, 'The "Vigorous Rule" of Bishop Lull: Between Bonifatian Mission and Carolingian Church Control', *Early Medieval Europe,* 13 (2005), esp. pp. 260–8. On the *Life of Boniface* as not primarily a missionary text: Wood, *The Missionary Life*, pp. 64–5.

[71] Willibald, *Life of Boniface*, 4.

[72] 'ad inspiciendos inmanissimos Germaniae populos', 'ut an inculta cordium arva, euangelico arata vomere, praedicationis recipere semen voluissent, consideraret', ibid., 5.

[73] 'quia contradicere huic tanto pontifici apostolico sedi praelato non auderet', ibid., 5–6.

[74] Ibid., 6. [75] Ibid. [76] Ibid., 5.

[77] 'Romanae ecclesiae sedis que apostolicae legatus', ibid., 6, 8; Wood, *The Missionary Life*, pp. 57, 131.

Thus in the *Life of Boniface*, papal power permeates ecclesiastical politics. Only once this is attained, can local patronage from secular rulers be secured.

The same representation of authority is found in the slightly more peculiar *Life of Willibald*, a significant part of which is a *hodoiporikon*, or relation of his voyage to Jerusalem.[78] Written by his sister, Huneberc of Heidenheim, it records Willibald's subsequent settlement in a Benedictine monastery and his visit to Rome with his Spanish monk-cum-companion, Petronax.[79] Once again, papal authority trumps local ecclesiastical authority. Boniface asks the pope that Willibald be sent to him and leave the monastery of Saint Benedict, but Willibald wishes to check with his abbot. The pope insists that his command was sufficient permission and Willibald pledges to go in accordance with the pope's wishes.[80] It is Boniface who ultimately makes Willibald a bishop, but the pope looms large and secular power is essentially absent beyond a fleeting mention of Duke Odilo.[81]

Although, as Amy Bosworth points out, Carolingian hagiography has received 'less attention from historians than the eras that preceded or followed', one of its most studied projects is that of Alcuin and his contemporaries at the court of Charlemagne.[82] Crucially, the rewriting processes at the court of Charlemagne were not simply a matter of tidying up grammar, but a question of rewriting early medieval texts because, in the words of Felice Lifshitz, 'the latter clashed with their own historical perspectives'.[83] One major change was on the question of missionary work. Wood pinpoints the *Life of Willibrord* by Alcuin as a blueprint for missionary ideology, and the first life to be 'specifically concerned with mission'.[84] The fact this blueprint emerged from the imperial rather than the papal centre had clear consequences for the role of papal authority in local missionary affairs, in the case of Alcuin particularly to do with the territory of the collapsed Avar polity.[85]

The *Life of Willehad* is perhaps the most useful distillation of these changes, precisely because it tells an eighth-century story related to the Bonifatian mission to Saxony and Frisia but does so in a significantly refocused ninth-century way. Similar trends are witnessed, however, in other texts about contemporary

[78] Huneberc of Heidenheim, *Life of Willibald*; Wood, *The Missionary Life*, p. 64.

[79] Huneberc of Heidenheim, *Life of Willibald*, 5.

[80] 'illumque sine sollicitudinis amibiguitate securum cum suae iussionis licentia oboedientialiter pergere precepit […] Confestimque tunc Willibaldus sacris sermonum exortationis consensum atque effectum se spontanee perpetrare, respondit'. Ibid.

[81] Ibid.

[82] A. Bosworth, 'Learning from the Saints: Ninth-Century Hagiography and the Carolingian Renaissance', *History Compass*, 8 (2010), pp. 1055–66, at p. 1056.

[83] F. Liftshitz, 'Beyond Positivism and Genre: "Hagiographical" Texts as Historical Narrative', *Viator*, 25 (1994), pp. 95–113, at p. 99.

[84] Wood, *The Missionary Life*, pp. 85–90, esp. p. 90.

[85] Ibid., p. 85; H. Reimitz, 'Conversion and Control: The Establishment of Liturgical Frontiers in Carolingian Panonnia', in W. Pohl, I. Wood, and H. Reimitz, eds., *The Transformation of Frontiers: from Late Antiquity to the Carolingians* (Leiden, 2001), pp. 188–207, at pp. 189–206.

missions, such as the *Life of Anskar*.[86] Written sometime ca. 838–850s, the anonymous *Life of Willehad* was composed at Echternach, a monastic centre with no access to missionary fields and, as Wood argues, it uses Willehad as a vehicle for Alcuin-ate ideas.[87] The structural similarities with the *Life of Boniface* are perhaps intentional but their recasting is clear. Willehad is said to leave Anglo-Saxon England not with the permission of his abbot, as Boniface did, but with the permission of the king of the Angles, Alchred.[88] Subsequently, he travels to Frisia, and nearby regions, not simply reviewing the land as Boniface does until he is given a papal appointment, but preaching and converting, as if the king's dispensation sufficed.[89] The *Life of Boniface* next takes the saint to Rome to receive papal approval and be sent north, but the *Life of Willehad* sees Charlemagne invite the saint instead, and having 'received him reverently and honourably' ('honorifice ac reverenter suscipiens'), he 'sent him to Saxony to the region that is called Wigmodia' to build churches and convert the people there.[90] When royal quarrel brought his mission in Saxony to an end, Willehad finally made a visit to Rome.[91] In place of papal appointment or pallium, Willehad mourns those lost in Saxony and having received nothing other than 'the consolation of the venerable Pope Hadrian' ('consolatione venerabilis papae Adriani'), the text notes, 'the servant of God departed and returned joyfully to Francia'.[92] Later with Charlemagne's council and approval, he sets off to Wigmodia, and the text stresses that 'the excellent prince [Charles] […] had Willehad the servant of God consecrated bishop'.[93] It is not the case therefore that missionary work was opposed or at odds with the papacy but simply that in ninth-century Carolingian hagiography its actors were no longer represented as legates of the apostolic see, as the *Life of Boniface* makes clear, but legates of Frankish imperial power.[94]

In the early medieval Carolingian realms, hagiographic output was clearly a political medium through which to express, construct, or project a state of social and political hierarchy desirable to authors and their communities. And as such this use of hagiography ought to be considered a part of the same project which, as Leyser notes, made the *Register* of Gregory the Great an indispensable resource in the early ninth century for the creation of a range of institutions

[86] In the *Life of Anksar*, the establishment of the archbishopric of Bremen is presented as King Louis' decision to follow upon the plan of Charlemagne, not the pope. Anskar is made archbishop of this Bremen see, and it is only 'in order that these arrangements should be permanently established', that the emperor sends Anskar to the pope. This is a complete reversal of the *Life of Boniface* where it is Gregory II who sends the saint, Boniface, to the secular ruler Charles. Rimbert, *Life of Anskar*, 12–13; Willibald, *Life of Boniface*, 6.

[87] Wood, *The Missionary Life*, pp. 90–1.

[88] Willibald, *Life of Boniface*, 4; *Life of Willehad*, 1.

[89] Willibald, *Life of Boniface*, 4; *Life of Willehad*, 3–4.

[90] 'misit in partes Saxoniae ad pagum qui dicitur Wigmodia', *Life of Willehad*, 5.

[91] Ibid., 6.

[92] 'servus Dei gaudens repedabat in Frantiam', ibid., 7.

[93] 'memoratus praecellentissimus princeps, […] servum Dei Willehadum consecrari fecit episcopum', ibid., 8.

[94] Willibald, *Life of Boniface*, 6.

such as new bishoprics and monasteries in the Frankish polity, and especially in Charlemagne's circle.[95]

Hagiography was clearly considered a political tool with equal potency by the papacy, as it formed a significant part of the response to the aforementioned Carolingian missionary claims. What Leyser calls the papacy's attempt to 'take control of the memory' of Gregory from the Frankish courts manifested itself in a burst of textual production, which was overwhelmingly hagiographical, and which was concentrated precisely in the mid to late ninth century, contemporaneous with the establishment of the Moravian bishopric and compilation of the *VM*.

This exclusively papal-centred hagiographical output was both interested in reclaiming former apostolicism and praising contemporary papal missionary activity. Four texts attest to this ninth-century papal response, and perhaps somewhat suspiciously all four have been associated more or less explicitly with one author, John Immonides, a deacon and one of the 'most important cultural figures at the Papal curia', who served under Pope Nicholas, Hadrian II, and John VIII.[96] The first text written by Immonides is the *Life of Gregory*, which is also the first recorded instance of Pope Gregory acquiring the epithet 'the great'.[97] The text, possibly 'the longest saint's life in early medieval Europe', was explicitly commissioned around 873 by Pope John VIII, the only pope whose correspondence with Methodios in Moravia survives, at around the same time that John requested that his own correspondence be kept in the model of Gregory's *Register*.[98] The second text associated with John Immonides is the *Life and Miracles of Saint Clement*, mentioned in Chapter 1, which had been requested by and was ultimately completed by Gauderic of Villetri sometime after Immonides' death, but before 882, when John VIII died, as it is dedicated to the pope.[99] This text was written shortly after the arrival of the relics brought by Cyril, and was clearly at the very least papally supported if not sponsored. It is associated with members of the highest echelons of the papal curia, namely Anastasius the Librarian, who helped by translating Greek texts and Immonides himself.[100]

Production of papal hagiography for earlier figures the curia wished to reclaim occurred at the same time as the framing of contemporary figures in their image.

[95] Leyser, 'The Memory of Gregory the Great', pp. 182–5.

[96] 'uno dei personaggi di maggior rilevanza culturale presso la Curia pontificia', P. Chiesa, 'Giovanni Diacono', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 56 (2001), https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovanni-diacono_res-02e6d283-87ee-11dc-8e9d-0016357eee51_(Dizionario-Biografico) / (last accessed: September 2023).

[97] John Immonides, *Life of Gregory*, in *MPL*, vol. 45, pp. 62–242; J. Latham, 'Inventing Gregory "the Great": Memory, Authority and the Afterlives of the *Letania Septiformis*', *Church History*, 84 (2015), pp. 1–31, at p. 11.

[98] Leyser, 'The Memory of Gregory the Great', pp. 189, 191–2.

[99] *Life and Miracles of Saint Clement*, in *Ioannis Hymmonidis et Gauderici Veliterni, Leonis Ostiensis, Excerpta ex Clementinis Recognitionibus a Tyrannio Rufini Translatis*, ed. G. Orlandi (Milan, 1968), pp. 1–165, at pp. 1–16.

[100] On the prominence of Anastasius: R. Forrai, *The Interpreter of Popes: The Translation Project of Anastasius Bibliothecarius* (PhD Thesis, Central European University, 2008), pp. 1–4.

The third and fourth texts which form part of this papal response are the biographical notices for Pope Nicholas I and Pope Hadrian II, which survive anonymously in the *Liber Pontificalis* but have been variously assigned to John Immonides and Anastasius the Librarian.[101] These mark a significant break with the earliest papal biographies in the *Liber*. Whoever the author, their innovative agenda is in part to do with the role of the papacy in missionary activity. Parting from the established convention of simply listing building works, the *Liber* texts are eager to stress the 'Gregorian' qualities of both popes, and offer accounts of their attempts to bring Bulgaria under papal jurisdiction.[102] This was in line with Pope Nicholas' conscious choice to evoke Gregory's works profusely in his famous *Letter to Boris of Bulgaria*.[103] That this was a successful association for Nicholas seems clear in the dream sequence of Immonides' *Life of Gregory*, in which a mysterious bishop, now generally identified as Formosus, tries to stop Immonides' work, but Gregory himself appears together with 'Pope Nicholas of venerable memory' and chases the bishop away.[104] Already by the 870s, Nicholas was remembered as Gregory's right-hand man.

The accounts of mission in the *Liber* texts are much more akin to the early Bonifatian hagiographies than to the Carolingian rewritings of mission, but their total silence on the role of the Franks in the Bulgarian conversion negotiations paints a more extreme picture. The pope is the primary leader of the mission, local rulers comply or invite it, and only in the notice for Hadrian II do the Greek clergy oppose it.[105] The Frankish polities are absent altogether, despite evidence that Boris of Bulgaria had also asked for bishops from King Louis 'the German', which had in turn annoyed both parties.[106]

[101] *Notice for Nicholas I*, 107.1–83 in *Le Liber Pontificalis*, ed. L. Duchesne, pp. 131–72; *The Lives of the Ninth Century Popes*, trans. R. Davis (Liverpool, 1995), pp. 205–49, 259–92; *Notice for Hadrian II*, 108.1–109 in *Le Liber Pontificalis*, ed. L. Duchense, pp. 173–91;. On the association with Immonides: Chiesa, 'Giovanni Diacono'; F. Bougard, 'Composition, diffusion et réception des parties tardives du Liber pontificalis (VIIIe–IXe siècles)', in F. Bougard and M. Sot, eds., *Liber, Gesta, histoire. Écrire l'histoire des évêques et des papes, de l'Antiquité au XXIe siècle* (Turnhout, 2009), pp. 127–52.

[102] Noted by: Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, p. 44. The various breaks in the patchwork text of the *Notice for Nicholas* are noted in *The Lives of the Ninth Century Popes*, p. 189. On the conversion of the Bulgarians: *Notice for Nicholas*, 69–75. *Notice for Hadrian*, 12–3, 47–59, 61–4.

[103] Pope Nicholas I, *Letter to Boris of Bulgaria*, 6, 7, 10, 49, 64, 68, 99. In *Epistolae Papae Nicholai*, ed. E. Perels, *MGH*, *Epp. VI* (Epistulae Karolini Aevi 4) (Munich 1978), pp. 568–600. *The Responses of Pope Nicholas I to the Questions of the Bulgars A.D. 866 (Letter 99)*, trans. W. North, in *Internet Medieval Sourcebook*, https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/866nicholas-bulgar.asp (last accessed: September 2023).

[104] 'beatus Gregorius, comitante secum dextrorsum reverendae memoriae papa Nicolao', John Immonides, *Life of Gregory*, 100. On the identification of Formosus: P. Devos, 'Le mystérieux épisode final de la Vita Gregorii de Jean Diacre. Formose et sa fuite de Rome', *Analecta Bollandiana*, 82 (1964), pp. 356–81. On the episode more generally: C. Leyser, 'Charisma in the Archive: Roman Monasteries and the Memory of Gregory the Great, c.870–c.940', in F. de Rubeis et al., eds., *Le scritture dai monasteri, II Seminario internazionale di studio 'I monasteri nell'alto medioevo'* (Rome, 2004), pp. 207–26, at pp. 214–15.

[105] *Notice for Hadrian II*, 47–58.

[106] *Annals of St-Bertin*, trans. J. Nelson (Manchester, 1991), 866.

Both texts also reveal insights into the way they perceive secular and religious authority more broadly. The notice for Nicholas opens with two consecutive meetings between the pope and the emperor, who remains unnamed. In the first, the emperor travels to meet Nicholas, in the second, immediately afterwards, the pope travels to meet the emperor.[107] The latter scene features the emperor serving as groom to the pope, leading his horse on foot.[108] The statement is clear: secular power is a helping hand to papal hegemony. A similar message emerges, albeit in a different context, from the notice for Hadrian which records a dispute between Roman and Greek clergy over the matter of which see Bulgarian territories fall into.[109] The papal legates make clear that 'the jurisdiction of sees organizes things otherwise than the divisions of kingdoms allow'.[110] In other words, even though Byzantium had formerly ruled the lands of Bulgaria, they remain territories of papal ecclesiastical jurisdiction. In short, hagiography was a profoundly politically-charged genre in the ninth-century Latin context, quite unlike its Byzantine episcopal equivalent, and the papacy's use of it sought to counter Carolingian claims.

The Pope in the VM amidst Latin Hagiography

In the study of the *VM*, as has been noted already, the bulk of scholarship has tended to look eastwards, but I am not the first to argue that the *VM* is best considered amidst and within the activities of Western missionaries. Two scholars, Grivec briefly in 1927 and Betti a little more thoroughly in 2013, have pointed to similarities between the work of Methodios as a person and that of Boniface or Augustine.[111] Betti has noted in particular that both Methodios and Boniface visit their areas of mission initially without but then specifically with papal support, and that both are granted geographically vague sees.[112] But as yet no close textual comparison like the one attempted here has been carried out.

This section seeks to make two points: the first is that structurally, as a saint's life, the *VM* resembles the *Life of Boniface*, and the other earlier texts of the Frankish missions, in the way it represents the relations between local secular

[107] *Notice for Nicholas I*, 9.

[108] This had only been recorded once before in 754, when according to the *Liber Pontificalis* King Pepin led Pope Stephen II's horse at Champagne. *Notice for Stephen II*, 25 in *Le Liber Pontificalis*, ed. Duchense, vol. 1, pp. 440–63. *The Lives of the Eight-Century Popes (Liber Pontificalis): The Ancient Biographies of Nine Popes from AD 715 to AD 817*, trans. R. Davis (Liverpool, 1992), pp. 297–308. The practice, then, interestingly, picks up in late Byzantium. R. Gomez, 'The Donation of Constantine in Byzantium', Late Antique and Byzantine Studies Seminar, Trinity Term 2019, Oxford.

[109] *Notice for Hadrian II*, 51–2.

[110] 'aliud ordinant iura sedium, aut patiuntur divisiones regnorum', ibid., 52.

[111] Grivec, *Slovanska apostola*, p. 13; Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, pp. 172–4.

[112] Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, pp. 172–4.

rulers, the saint, and the pope—and thus, that it is consciously distinct from contemporary ninth-century Frankish episcopal hagiography. The second is that, ideologically, the text parts with the balanced political landscape of the *Life of Boniface*, and in its promotion of papal primacy it aligns with contemporary papal hagiographies. It seems highly probable that the author was aware of the hagiographic surge of production at the heart of the papal curia, and intentionally composed the *VM* as a text in which popes behave in the kind of Gregorian manner that they fashioned for themselves in the ninth-century textual output which they patronised.

There are a number of structural similarities between the *Life of Boniface* and the *VM*. The *Life of Boniface* stresses, quite unlike later Carolingian texts such as the *Life of Willehad*, that Boniface did not undertake any active preaching in Frisia before his visit to the papacy.[113] As discussed earlier, the *VM* also goes to great lengths to insist that Methodios and Cyril did not do anything against papal canons once they arrived in Moravia.[114] Both are sent as teachers first, and only upon another visit to Rome are they elevated to the role of bishop.[115] Further, both saints are sent to a people and not to a see, Boniface to report on the 'savage people of Germany', and Methodios to 'all the lands of the Slavs'. Both saints initially refuse to be appointed to the episcopal office whether that be Willibrord in the *Life of Boniface* or the unnamed emperor of the *VM*, but neither resists the appointment by the pope. If we omit the Franks altogether from the *VM*, the portrayal of Sviatopluk, Rastislav, and Kočel and their unwavering support but total deference to papal commands also aligns with the portrayal of secular authority in the *Life of Boniface*. The sections on the Moravian and Pannonian missions are the original contributions of the *VM* author, and they closely resemble the structure of the *Life of Boniface*. It is by no means impossible given the *Life*'s circulation, therefore, that the author of the *VM* had come across the text in some shape or form.[116]

The *VM* does not simply choose to emulate this earlier text in structure, and therefore stand aside from contemporary debates over leadership in missionary work. It also clearly chooses to side with the papal position of the ninth century. Its account of the ecumenical councils as led by the pope but assisted by the emperor, is in the spirit of the image in the notice for Nicholas I, of the pope on horseback, being led by the emperor as groom.[117] The servility of secular power in matters of religion is evident in both. Likewise, the case that the territory of

[113] Willibald, *Life of Boniface*, 4. [114] *VM*, 8.4–16.

[115] Willibald, *Life of Boniface*, 5; *VM,* 8.4–16; Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, p. 173.

[116] The manuscript circulation of the *Life of Boniface* does not make this an impossibility, in Levison's edition a number of ninth-century copies survive, including one from Bavaria (Munich BSB, Clm 1086), not far from the Eastern Frontier. It is also possible the Moravian milieu had access to these kinds of texts directly from the papacy. On manuscripts, see: *Vita Bonifatii auctore Willibaldo*, ed. W. Levison, pp. xviii–xxvii, esp. nos. 1, 2a, 3, and 6.

[117] *VM*, 1–2; *Notice for Nicholas*, 9.

Moravia is papal territory, made by the *VM* against Frankish bishops, relies on the exact same ideological premises as the case of the papal legates against the Greek clergy on Bulgaria: this was at one time papal land, and therefore, regardless of political jurisdiction, ought to be so once again. In the notice for Hadrian II, this means identifying Bulgaria with the episcopal sees Epirus Nova, Epirus Vetus, Thessaly, and Dardania; in the *VM* Methodios is appointed to the seat of Saint Andronicus, once again claiming a historic papal see over and above contemporary political overlordship.[118] This of course suggests the possibility that the author of the *VM* was aware of the missionary pose of the contemporary papacy, and more so the practice of expressing this hagiographically. One is tempted to suggest that the author of the *VM* had access to the notices for Nicholas I and Hadrian II, given the Moravian milieu's recorded contact with John VIII at the height of the textual production. Could the generic account of imperial reverence to Pope Nicholas be in turn echoed by the equally vague reverence to Methodios expressed by the other unnamed emperor in the *VM*?

That the *VM* uses papal language has also recently been shown by Jakub Kabala's study of one problematic phrase in the text, where Methodios accuses his Frankish opponents of 'treading upon the ancient canons'.[119] As Kabala shows, this phrase has caused a lot of contention in scholarship, but his persuasive solution is that it can be explained with reference to contemporary Latin texts. The idea of treading upon laws, he notes, 'became a favourite in ninth-century Rome'.[120] And all three of the popes I have discussed, Nicholas I, Hadrian II, and John VIII not only evoked the image of trampling when decrying violations of canons but also frequently referred to canons as 'ancient' or 'old', as the *VM* does.[121]

Absolute certainty about direct textual connections notwithstanding, it is clear that the author of the *VM* knew which way the political wind was blowing, and what language was required to appeal to papal patronage. That the text served clear political purposes has led some scholars to suggest that it is not really a hagiography.[122] But to the contrary, I argue that the choice to write a hagiography of Methodios as a way of promoting the case of Moravian episcopal independence was an extremely conscious authorial decision, based on intimate knowledge of the value and use of the genre in the Latin tradition.

Whilst the specific ninth-century state of Latin hagiography informed the structure and generic papal agenda of the *VM*, in what follows I suggest that the exact articulation of the defence of Moravia in the text was framed specifically against Frankish claims to the territory as they were articulated in one surviving text, the *Conversio Bagoariorium et Carantanorum*.

[118] *Notice for Hadrian*, 53; *VM*, 8.17.
[119] *VM*, 9.
[120] Kabala, 'Trampling the Old Laws', p. 88.
[121] Ibid., pp. 89–92.
[122] Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, p. 104.

The Case for Methodian Illegitimacy

The Conversio Bagoariorium et Carantanorum

The *VM* and the letters of John VIII both attest to the capture and imprisonment of Methodios by Frankish bishops.[123] There is general scholarly consensus that the *Conversio* as a document was 'made necessary by the presence of Methodios'.[124] Further, given its compilation in 870, shortly after the imprisonment of Methodios, and its heavily legalistic language, it is most probable that the arguments the text conveys were the very same arguments used in court to prove that Methodios was an '*intrusor et invasor* in the diocese of Salzburg'.[125]

The *Conversio* is a unique text in Latin literature, but what little attention it has received has come largely from historians of the Frankish world.[126] At most, historians of the Moravian mission have acknowledged that it offers insight into the sorts of reasons given for the imprisonment of Methodios, but no close textual analysis of the two texts has been carried out side by side.[127] I would argue such a comparison is much needed, because it is highly likely the author of the *VM* had access to the *Conversio* as a text, or that at least had heard its arguments made in the Methodian trial. In light of this, I argue that both the form and content of the *VM* suggest it is engaging with and arguing against the *Conversio* position. This engagement with the Frankish position is threefold: firstly, the use of ecumenical councils in particular, secondly the stress on the camaraderie between Methodios and the Slavs of Moravia and Pannonia, and thirdly the role of and use of the local rulers, Sviatopluk, Rastislav, and Kočel in the text. I start with a short summary of the contents of the *Conversio*.

The text opens with a summary of the life of Rupert, the first archbishop of Salzburg, and then offers a list of those who succeeded him, ending with Virgil,

[123] *VM*, 9.9. Only fragments in canonical collections survive from letters of John for the period 872–6. Of these, a number are addressed to Frankish dignitaries asking for Methodios' release. John VIII, *Register*, in *Fragmenta Registri Ioannis VIII. Papae*, in *MGH*, *Epistolarum*, 7, 5 (Berlin, 1928), 20–3.

[124] Wood, *The Missionary Life*, p. 173.

[125] Ibid., p. 172; H. Wolfram, 'The Bavarian Mission to Pannonia in the 9th Century', in Kouřil, *Great Moravia and the Beginnings of Christianity*, p. 29; H. Wolfram, *Grenzen und Räume: Geschichte Österreichs vor seiner Entstehung* (Vienna, 1995), p. 259. With a bibliography in: Reimitz, 'Conversion and Control', p. 204; Lošek, *Die Conversio*, p. 7.

[126] See, e.g., S. Airlie, 'True Teachers and Pious Kings: Salzburg, Louis the German and the Christian Order', in R. Gameson et al., eds., *Belief and Culture in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 89–105; Wood, *The Missionary Life*, pp. 168–81.

[127] E.g. Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, p. 125. More often than not, scholars have previously turned east, to Byzantium, and not west when studying the lives, largely due to the dominance of the *VC* and conflation of the two lives into one purpose discussed at the start of this chapter. This has meant that the *Conversio* is absent from the major studies on the *VM* or Methodios in Moravia more broadly. See for instance: Grivec, *Slovanska apostola*, pp. 95–8; Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions*, pp. 160–93; Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, pp. 85–113. Betti's focus on the papal context means that she has only fleeting remarks on the *Conversio*.

who the text claims was appointed in 767.[128] As Wood notes, this is not the date historians agree on (namely, 749), nor is it a sufficient summary of the conversion of Bavaria, as it reduces the process entirely to the foundation of the Archbishopric of Salzburg.[129] The text then turns to a history of the Carantanians and the Pannonian lands, which encompasses the Lake Balaton mentioned in the *VC* and *VM*, and are called simply 'Pannonia' in the lives.[130] A brief history of Carantanian rulers, Dagobert and Samo, moves the text into the eighth century, when Avar attacks lead the Slavic leader Boruth to ask for help from the Bavarians and accept Frankish overlordship.[131] The purpose of this story is clearly to stress the history of Frankish control and therefore conversion of the Carantanian peoples. The text then records Boruth sending his son and nephew to the Bavarian court to be raised as Christians, and how the two of them succeeded as leaders of the Carantanians.[132] The nephew, Hotimir (or Chietmar), is then said to focus on Christianisation, asking the aforementioned Virgil for a bishop.[133] Virgil sends Modestus with clerics, all of them named, and more clergy after Hotimir's death at the request of *dux* Waltunc, all of them named together with the churches they dedicated.[134] The text then moves to an ancient history of Lower Pannonia and how Charlemagne hands the region to Arno, Bishop of Salzburg.[135] Arno receives a *pallium* from Pope Leo and is sent by Charlemagne to preach to the Slavs. He goes with a *comes* Gerold and Deoderic who he presents with a bishop.[136] After Arno's death, the text stresses that the area remained under the control of Salzburg and focuses on his successors.[137] In particular, Liupram, archbishop of Salzburg, makes an agreement with the chieftain Pribina, to go through and consecrate his lands.[138] A list of the priests and churches consecrated under Pribina follows.[139] Then in 848 Louis the German grants to Pribina all that he held in Lower Pannonia except the lands owned by the church of Salzburg, which are specified in detail.[140] The friendship between the Franks and Pannonians continues even after the Moravians killed Pribina, ca. 860/1; under his successor, Kočel, more churches are consecrated and named.[141] By way of conclusion, the text makes its purpose even clearer:

> A tempore igitur, quo dato et praecepto domni Karoli imperatoris orientalis Pannoniae populus a Iuvavensibus regi coepit praesulibus usque in presens tempus sunt anni LXXV, quod nullus episcopus alicubi veniens potestatem habuit ecclesiasticam in illo confinio nisi Salzburgenses rectores neque presbyter aliunde veniens plus tribus mensibus ibi suum ausus est colere officium, priusquam

[128] *Conversio*, 1–2. [129] Wood, *The Missionary Life*, p. 168.
[130] *Conversio*, 3. [131] Ibid., 4. [132] Ibid. [133] Ibid., 5.
[134] Ibid. [135] Ibid., 6–7. [136] Ibid., 8. [137] Ibid., 9.
[138] Ibid., 11. [139] Ibid. [140] Ibid., 12. [141] Ibid., 13.

> suam dimissoriam episcopo praesentaverit epistolam. Hoc enim ibi observatum fuit, usqe dum nova orta est doctrina Methodii philosophi[142]
>
> Since the time when the people of eastern Pannonia were placed under the direction of the bishop of Salzburg on the orders of the emperor, Charlemagne, up to the present time, it has been seventy-five years that no bishop, having come from elsewhere, has had ecclesiastical authority in this region except the rectors of Salzburg, nor has any priest, having come from anywhere else dared to perform the office for more than three months before submitting his letter of discharge to the bishop. This was observed there, until the new teaching of the Philosopher Methodios appeared.

The text makes three moves, therefore, presented as a general history of the conversion of the Bavarians and Carantanians. The first is to establish the foundation of Salzburg as an archbishopric, which is the sole purpose of the Bavarians in the narrative. The second is to establish that the secular Carantanian rulers had been under the overlordship of the Franks since the time of Boruth in the eighth century, and had themselves been open to and requesting of Christianisation from the Franks; and the third is that this region of Carantanian rule was granted by Charlemagne to the Archbishopric of Salzburg for missionary purposes. All these claims are supported by tedious lists of priests and churches consecrated. Although the *Conversio* is no hagiography, it is clear that the way in which it envisages the role of secular and papal authority in missionary activity is not too dissimilar from that of the *Life of Willehad*. It is Charlemagne who tells Arno to preach to the Slavs; and the pope only makes an appearance to grant his approval and *pallium*. Moreover, as Wood argues, the *Conversio* is a testament to the move away from the hagiographical and towards the legalistic discourse of mission north of the Alps. As documentation from the newly consecrated lands accumulated, a move away from legendary heroes and towards detailed legalistic precedent makes good sense. It is perhaps this same documentary *zeitgeist* that we see in the *Life of Anskar*, which likewise seems more concerned with the legitimacy of its diocese than its missionary hero.[143] What becomes clear when reading the *Conversio* is that the Methodian case is rather weak in terms of contemporary Frankish missionary discourse.

Lacking in diligent lists of formerly consecrated churches, priests, or bishops, the only response that the Methodian community could muster was a different kind of list with which the text opens: a list of prophets, evangelists, and ecumenical councils. Whereas the *Conversio* claims immediate authority through near-contemporary priestly succession, the *VM* opts for universal authority, by positioning Methodios as a successor in the long line of Christian holy men. As discussed, this amounts to an acceptance of papal primacy, but it also serves as a

[142] Ibid., 14. [143] Wood, *The Missionary Life*, p. 181.

direct attack on the legitimacy of the local church councils held in the Carolingian territories.[144] Only six councils are recognised by the *VM*, and Methodios follows in the footsteps of those original founders of the right faith, not in the footsteps of contemporary and near-contemporary local bishops like Arno or Virgil.

The stress on camaraderie between Methodios and the Slavs is also best explained in the context of the *Conversio*'s account of a historic relationship between the Frankish and Carantanian leaders. In the *Conversio* this starts with the Slavs asking for help from the Franks in the eighth century and ends with Louis the German's donation of the Carantanian lands back to their rulers, as a sign of generosity. Whilst this relationship was most likely not as rosy as the *Conversio* suggests, the text is structured around a clear us/them binary. The background of Cyril and Methodios, as Slavonic speakers, clearly lent itself to the dissolution of this binary. Given the purpose of the *VC*, Cyril's knowledge of Slavonic is, perhaps unsurprisingly, barely evoked in that text. In the *VM* on the other hand, we see the activation of a potential identity category: the focus on Methodios' Slavonic speech and personal relationship with the Slavs is used to formulate a legitimacy claim on different terms to those available to the Franks. The *VM* turns to the personal history of Methodios to establish a slightly more abstract but nonetheless cogent relationship between Methodios and the Slavs, to compete with the historic relationship between the Frankish church and rulers and the Carantinian Slavs.

It seems clear that both texts make cases for their protagonists as the upholders both of ecclesiastical continuity and of relations with the Slavonic polities. The way they go about this, however, is fundamentally different, and as I argue, the *VM* in particular was most probably a reaction to precisely the kind of discourse we find in the *Conversio*.

There is one final aspect of the *VM* narrative that can be explained as a reaction to the *Conversio* case, namely the representation of the role of Kočel, leader of Pannonia or Carantania. As noted above, the Kočel mission is the most heavily reworked part of the narrative of the *VC* found in the *VM*.[145] In short, in the *VC*, Cyril goes to Moravia alone, then is called to Balaton by Kočel, teaches some students there and heads to Venice to debate trilingualists, and then to Rome to be endorsed by Hadrian II and die. In the *VM*, the two brothers arrive in Moravia and are called by the pope immediately. Then Cyril dies and Kočel writes to the pope asking for a Slavonic teacher. The pope sends Methodios to all the Slavs, writing to Rastislav, Sviatopluk, and Kočel, but then it is Kočel once again who asks the pope to make Methodios his bishop. This change is particularly striking given that unlike Sviatopluk, we have no surviving papal letters to Kočel actually

[144] This is in stark contrast with the *Life of Boniface*, for example, which presents early medieval church councils as the continuators of the ecumenical council tradition, see: Willibald, *Life of Boniface*, 8.

[145] See Chapter 2.

discussing Methodios. To the contrary, John VIII asks the Frankish clergy to give over Methodios from imprisonment specifically to the care of Sviatopluk.[146] Why does Kočel shift from essentially a non-actor in the *VC* to the person who twice asks for Methodios from the pope in the *VM*?

As I have mentioned thus far, scholars have not spent much time trying to explain these intertextual contradictions. Betti, whose study is by far the most comprehensive of the two texts in the last few decades, spots this difference. At one point, she suggests that this means Kočel entered into 'secret negotiations with the Apostolic see', but at another she uses the fact Sviatopluk, Rastislav, and Kočel were 'confusingly mentioned at different times' and that they 'appeared or disappeared without any clear explanation' to argue for a later dating of the *VC* and *VM* texts.[147] Trying both to use the *VM*'s mention of Kočel as a source for actual papal policy, and then dismissing the use of the name, due to its difference with the *VC*, as a confusion with no explanation other than that the text was written later, Betti tries to have her cake and eat it. I argue that the use (or non-use) of Kočel does have a 'clear explanation', and more broadly, that differences between texts are not simply mistakes but ideological transformations.

To start with, it is worth noting that the Moravian and Pannonian polities in the eighth and ninth centuries were of rather different status. The former was more of an autonomous polity, whilst as far as the Franks were concerned the latter was a subkingdom of sorts granted by the Frankish king to Pribina as a gift.[148] This sub-autonomous status, or at least the perception thereof, is what enables the arguments over ecclesiastical jurisdiction found in the *Conversio*, which notably says nothing of Moravia. It is no surprise therefore, that given the Frankish missionary work in Pannonia and the *Conversio*'s specific invocation of Kočel himself, as a ruler who continued the consecration of churches under the Frankish church, the *VM* is keen to make a claim to Kočel.[149] The Kočel the author found in the *VC*, however, as someone interested in a Byzantine missionary working without papal approval, did not suffice. This Kočel was transformed by the *VM* into a fully paid-up supporter of papal ecclesiastical supremacy, who twice asks specifically for Methodios (and not Cyril) from the pope. Given the specific claims of the *Conversio* that Pannonia was given a bishop by Salzburg, it is crucial in the *VM* that it is not Rastislav in Moravia, as in the *VC*, but Kočel in Pannonia who asks for Methodios to be made bishop by the pope.[150] This, together with the papal letter already discussed, seeks to erase or at least refute the legitimacy of the missionary work done in Pannonia under the Archbishopric of Salzburg.

[146] Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, p. 133. [147] Ibid., pp. 69, 89.
[148] Wolfram, 'The Bavarian Mission', pp. 30–1; C. Lübke, 'From the Perspective of the East Frankish Empire: Moravia and Its Ascent to Power under Prince Rostislav', in Kouřil, ed., *The Cyril and Methodius Mission and Europe*, pp. 86–92, at pp. 89–90.
[149] *Conversio*, 13. [150] *Conversio*, 11; *VC*, 14.1–5; *VM*, 8.17.

To sum up, a number of peculiarities or divergences from the *VC* found in the *VM* can be best explained not as mistakes of a later text, but as specifically responding to contemporary debates proposed by the Frankish church and witnessed in the *Conversio*. If, as I have argued, the *VM* is quite clearly on the side of the papacy, and pitching its text to appease a papal patron, why did it need to challenge the positions of the antagonistic Frankish church? That the Methodian community needed answers to those challenges is made clearest if we turn to the papacy's position on the Methodian see in the aftermath of the death of John VIII.

The Late Ninth-Century Papacy and Moravia

As it is well acknowledged in scholarship, the *VM* was written at a particularly unfortunate time for the Methodian milieu.[151] The death of John VIII in 882 witnessed a change in papal policy towards Moravia at least by the time of Stephen V.[152] Stephen banned the use of Slavonic in the liturgy in 890, accused Methodios of disobeying John, and confirmed that the papacy had no theological issue with the Frankish church's position on the filioque.[153] This re-rapprochement with the Frankish church, came not only from the papacy, however, but also from Sviatopluk, who, from what the last letters of John VIII suggest, was asking for Methodios' Frankish rival, Wiching, to be made bishop of Nitra after our protagonist's death.[154] This alone points to one reason why the *VM* author felt the need to engage with arguments posed by the *Conversio*: the reality of papal support was in fact waning, and the papacy was becoming more aligned with the position of the Frankish church.

The representation of the papacy in the *VM* points to the very same recognition of the changing tides at the Roman court. Rather paradoxically, papal documents reveal only Pope John VIII's actual contact with Methodios and Moravia. No letters by Nicholas I or Hadrian II survive to or about Methodios and the Moravian mission, and neither Cyril nor Methodios are mentioned in the *Liber Pontificalis* recording the two popes' lives. This is doubly striking given the missionary interest of the texts discussed earlier. Yet, whilst Nicholas and Hadrian both feature in the *VM* as supporters of Methodios, John VIII, the only pope whose support is recorded in independent witnesses, is not mentioned at all.

[151] See, for instance, Floria, *Skazaniia*, pp. 85–6.

[152] Leyser, 'The Memory of Gregory the Great', p. 196.

[153] The papal position on the *filioque* had up until then been rather ambivalent. Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, p. 46; Stephen V, *Register*, in *Fragmenta registri Stephani V. papae*, ed. E. Caspar in *MGH*, Epp. VII (Epistolae Karolini Aevi V), (Weidmann, 1974), 33.

[154] Wood, *The Missionary Life*, p. 175; John VIII, *Letters*, in Registrum Iohannis VIII. papae, ed. E. Caspar, in *MGH*, Epp VII (Epistolae Karolini Aevi V), (2nd ed., Berlin, 1974), Letter 255, p. 223.

Betti, in the most comprehensive study of the papacy and Moravia, offers two slightly different explanations for this paradox. Firstly, on the state of the papal record, she supports Peri's argument that Hadrian II and John VIII, who seem to have defended Methodios, present a radical divergence with papal policy.[155] In consequence, Betti argues that Stephen V's change of tune on the matter of Methodios, and the ecclesiastical remit of Moravia, was in fact a return to the usual papal approach. This in turn, permits Betti to suggest that the absence of papal records concerned with Methodios from Hadrian II's letters and vita is not accidental, but rather an erasure or suppression motivated by this shift in papal policy under Stephen V.[156] She also voices the possibility proposed well over a century ago by Lapotre that the corpus of John VIII's Register for the years 872–6, which does not survive except in excerpts, was in fact subject to 'an intentional violation'.[157] I take no issue with the possibility for ideological destruction here.

However, whilst Betti views the papal records as living monuments, affected by and engaging with contemporary politics, the *VM* is given no such courtesy. In the *VM*, the omission of John VIII and 'this problematic description of papal policy is barely sufficient to support the very early dating that scholars attribute to the sources'.[158] In short, when the papal registers omit information it is because of political action, when the *VM* does it is because of error. As elsewhere in this chapter I seek to challenge the idea that the *VM*'s omissions are simply mistakes, by arguing three points.

Firstly, that it is clear the *VM* author had access to letters by John VIII but used these together with information from the *VC* to formulate a forged letter by Hadrian II. Secondly, that this was done for the same reason that the *VM* inserts another pope, Nicholas I, absent from the *VC*, into its narrative, namely, to create a sense of continuity in papal practice and to omit any evidence of papal doubt in the Methodian position. And thirdly, that the insertion of Hadrian II and Nicholas at the expense of John VIII is done precisely because of the *VM*'s recognition of the changing power dynamics in Rome, which had led to the ascension of Stephen V (ca. 885–91) and the return of John VIII's rival Formosus to the papal court and later to the papal throne (ca. 891–6). Thus, the *VM*'s advocacy of papal primacy, and refutation of Frankish claims to the Moravian lands, was in some sense an offering towards a new, wavering papal patron in the decade or so after Methodios' death. This offering seems to have been met with limited success.

[155] Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, pp. 44–7; V. Peri, 'Il mandato missionario e canonico di Metodio e l'ingresso della lingua slava nella liturgia', *Archivum Historiae Pontificae*, 26 (1988), pp. 9–70.

[156] Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, pp. 53–4.

[157] Ibid., p. 123; A. Lapotre, 'L'Europe et le Saint-Siège à l'époque carolingienne I: Le pape Jean VIII (872–882)', in *Études sur la papauté au IXe siècle* (2nd ed., Torino, 1978), pp. 57–437.

[158] Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, p. 105.

The *VM*'s rendering of a letter by Hadrian II has already been discussed in this chapter. The text serves more than one purpose in the *VM*. A key role played by the letter discussed above is to make clear that Cyril and Methodios never transgressed papal jurisdiction, a clarification to the narrative of Cyril's travels as they are presented in the *VC*. Another function of the letter in the *VM* is to establish Hadrian II's patronage of Methodios and his insistence that the use of Slavonic is permitted, provided one concession: 'during the mass may the Apostle and Gospel be read in Latin first, and afterwards in Slavonic'.[159] This kind of compromise is not discussed in the *VC* where the pope blessed the Slavonic books and had the students of Cyril ordained. In the *VC*, these students then performed the liturgy (the Greek word is used in the Slavonic here 'liturgy' ('лїтоургїю') and not as in the *VM* the Latinate word for mass) in Slavonic in a number of churches in Rome: St Peter, St Hadrian, St Petronius, and St Paul.[160] No mention is made of the service following or being followed by Latin. As noted, moreover, no letter of Hadrian II survives which asserts this.

However, as a number of scholars have discussed, the letter of Hadrian found in the *VM* does use the language of authentic papal letters. Milko Kos' thorough line-by-line analysis of the letter demonstrates Latin examples of phrases and honorific titles from surviving letters by Nicholas, Hadrian II, and John VIII, and insists that the letter must therefore be authentic, and by Hadrian II.[161] This does not necessarily follow. All this study demonstrates is that the letter is believably papal. More specifically, it has been noted that the letter contains content which resembles that of a letter by John VIII, in particular one known as *Industriae Tuae* to Sviatopluk of Moravia and dated to 880, but few have taken this as evidence to doubt the authenticity of the former.[162] The case for authenticity, however, seems clunky: the *VM* author uses an authentic letter by Hadrian II which does not survive but does not use surviving letters by John VIII which we know were sent to Sviatopluk, the ruler to whom Methodios is assigned for protection, and which contain all of the information necessary to formulate the text found in the *VM*. It seems that here, the simplest explanation is the most plausible: the *VM* just uses the letters by John VIII that were at hand. The *Industriae* enjoins:

[159] 'да на мъши пьрвѣе чьтоуть апостолъ и евангелиѥ римьскы, таче словѣньскы', *VM*, 8.13.

[160] *VC*, 17.7–9.

[161] M. Kos, 'O pismu papeža Hadriana II knezom Rastislavu, Svetopolku in Koclju', *Razprave, Slovenska Akademija Znanosti in Umetnosti v Ljubljani*, 2 (1944), pp. 271–95.

[162] Those accepting its authenticity include: Kos, 'O pismu papeža Hadriana II', p. 295; B. Grafenauer, 'Der Brief Hadrians II an die slavische Frusten: echt, verfalscht oder Falschung? (Unersicht zum Stand der Forschung)', in *Acta Congressus Histriae Slavicae Salisburgensis in memoriam SS. Cyrilli et Methodii anno 1963 celebrati*, IV (Wiesbaden, 1968), pp. 63–77; M. Lacko, *The Popes and Great Moravia in Light of Roman Documents* (Rome, 1972), p. 86–7; Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions*, pp. 147–9; Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, p. 96; Floria, *Skazaniia*, p. 73. Betti strongly questions its authenticity but does, on a number of occasions, then use it as actual evidence for papal behavior. See: Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, pp. 86–9 (doubts of authenticity), pp. 172, 192 (uses nonetheless).

> […] ut in omnibus ecclesiis terrae vestrae propter maiorem honorificentiam evangelium Latine legatur et postmodum Sclavinica lingua translatum in auribus populi Latina verba non intellegentis adnuntietur.[163]
>
> that in all your lands' churches, as a sign of reverence the gospel let the Gospel be read in Latin and afterwards proclaimed translated into the Slavonic language for the ears of the people who do not understand the Latin words.[164]

This is the same instruction we find in the *VM* letter, but not in the *VC*. Whenever this was agreed, it was clearly after the death of Constantine-Cyril and the completion of his vita. It is also a letter from John VIII to Sviatopluk that makes it clear that Hadrian II had first sent Methodios to Moravia.[165] With such a letter at hand, the *VM* author, whose loose editorialising abilities have been clearly established in the way that the council synopsis and *VC* were treated, has clearly taken the information provided in the letters of John VIII, to formulate what an original letter by Hadrian II might plausibly have looked like. The letters of John and the *VM* also share a small corpus of relevant biblical quotations to defend vernacular liturgy. The *VM* section of the letter stating the custom of reading Latin first and then Slavonic notes the purpose of Slavonic letters:

> да са испълнить книжьное слово яко: 'Въсьхвалать господа вьси языци' и дроугоиде: 'вьси възглаголють языкы разлличьны величьья божия, якоже даст имъ сватыи доухъ отвѣщавати'[166]
>
> in order that the word of scripture would be carried out: 'Praise God all people' (Psalm, 116:1), and elsewhere: 'Everyone will praise the greatness of God in different languages, as the holy spirit enabled them to speak' (Acts, 2:4)

The *Industriae* also dwells on the purpose of Slavonic. However, it is several sentences before asserting the order of languages that it notes:

> Litteras denique Sclaviniscas a Constantino quondam philosopho reppertas, quibus Deo laudes debite resonent, iure laudamus et in eadem lingua Christi domini nostri preconia et opera enarrentur, iubemus; neque enim tribus tantum, sed omnibus linguis Dominum laudare auctoritate sacra monemur, quae praecipit dicens: 'Laudate Dominum omnes gentes et collaudate eum omnes populi', et apostoli repleti Spiritu sancto locuti sunt omnibus linguis magnalia

[163] John VIII, *Letters*, 255, p. 224.
[164] Amended from Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, p. 87.
[165] 'Quia vero audivimus, quia Methodios vester archiepiscopus ab antecessore nostro, Adrian scilicet papa, ordinatus vobisque directus aliter doceat, quam coram sede apostolica se credere verbis et litteris professus est, valde miramur.' John VIII, *Letters*, 200, p. 160.
[166] *VM*, 8.13.

> Dei; hinc et Paulus caelestis quoque tuba insonat monens: 'Omnis lingua confiteatur, quia dominus noster Iesus Christus in gloria est Dei Patris'.[167]
>
> And lastly, we justly praise the Slavonic letters previously found by the philosopher Constantine, and through which praises of God resound, and we order that the praises and deeds of Christ our lord, are expounded in that language; and we are reminded to praise God in his divine power, in all languages, which prescribed as follows: 'Praise the Lord all nations, and praise him together with all people' (Psalm, 116) and the apostles filled with the holy spirit, declaring the wonders of God in all languages (Cf. Acts, 2:11), here is also the heavenly Paul admonishing us with the sound of the trumpet: 'And every tongue confess that Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father' (Phil., 2:11)

The use of Psalm 116 serves in both texts as a justification for the invention of Slavonic, as is the use of Acts 2, albeit from slightly different sections across the two texts. Psalm 116 is also used in the *VC*, as one of the quotations Cyril throws at the Latins in the third major disputation in this text.[168]

That the *VM* is using content from the letters of John VIII therefore seems clear, as was already suggested by Betti's analysis. A more sophisticated obfuscation is occurring in the forged letter, however. The *Industriae* by John VIII is in fact rather unusual, because it represents a major change in the pope's position on the use of Slavonic in the liturgy.[169] In an earlier set of two letters to Sviatopluk and Methodios, it is clear that John's position on the role of Slavonic was initially more prohibitive. John VIII wrote to Methodios in 879, calling him to defend himself in Rome. In the letter, aside from questioning the content of his teachings, which may be to do with the filioque, the pope separately addressed the medium of Methodios' teaching:

> Audimus etiam, quod missas cantes in barbara, hoc est Sclavina lingua, unde iam litteris nostris per Paulum episcopum Anconitanum tibi directis prohibuimus, ne in ea lingua sacra missarum sollempnia celebrares, sed vel in Latina vel in Greca lingua, sicut ecclesia Dei toto terrarum orbe diffusa et in omnibus gentibus dilatata cantat. Predicare vero aut sermonem in populo facere tibi licet, quoniam psalmista omnes ammonet Dominum gentes laudare et apostolus: 'Omnis' inquit'lingua confiteatur, quia dominus Iesus in Gloria est Dei patris'.[170]

[167] John VIII, *Letters*, 255, p. 223–4.

[168] *VC*, 16.13. See a table of all quotes in Chapter 3. Vavřínek has noted this similarity too, but has instead argued that the reason the letter of Hadrian II in the *VM* uses the same quotations as the *VC* is not because the former text had the latter at hand but because the third disputation of the *VC* actually circulated as a separate treatise written by Cyril himself, and delivered at the papal court before Hadrian II and John VIII. This seem unnecessarily overcomplicated, see: Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, pp. 77–8.

[169] Floria, *Skazaniia*, pp. 73–4; Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions*, pp. 162–6.

[170] John VIII, *Letters*, 201, p. 161.

> We have heard, in addition, that you sing the mass in the barbarian, that is to say Slavonic language, due to which with our letter, sent to you through Paul the Bishop of Ancona, we forbid that you celebrate the sacred mass in that language, but either in the Latin or the Greek language, as the church of God delivers it, which has spread in the whole world and has [spread] amongst all people. We permit you, however, to preach among the populace [in Slavonic] since the psalmist calls all people to praise God (cf. Psalm 116), and the apostle says: 'And let every tongue confess, that Jesus is our Lord to the glory of the father' (Phil. 2:11)

It seems clear therefore, that a mere year before his letter to Sviatopluk, John VIII used the same two biblical citations (Psalm 116 and Phil. 2:11), to argue the very opposite case: that Slavonic ought not to be used in the actual mass, but only in sermons or homilies. What changed John's policy is beyond the scope of this study, but it seems clear that the papal position on Slavonic was far from stable, even between two letters and two years. With no letters from Hadrian II surviving, we may never know what precise conditions on the use of Slavonic in liturgy structured the initial appointment of Methodios as bishop. It is possible, that Hadrian's policy was much more akin to John's 879 letter than that of 880, or that his policy too changed drastically over short periods of time. What the *VM* is doing, therefore, by selecting the *Industriae*, and putting its position into the mouth of Pope Hadrian II, is trying to create a long-term precedent for an unstable, short-lived policy. The *VM* author was clearly aware this was the best deal they were going to get. There was no reason for the *VM* to not use the precedent we found in the *VC* where Hadrian II seems to offer absolutely no restrictions on the Slavonic liturgy in Rome, if this had seemed to the author a plausible or possible outcome. But if it was clear by the 880s that this was not an option, the *VM* settled instead for forging a historic document to propagate a fairly short-lived, but unusually accommodating papal stance.

The same attempt to fabricate a continuity between the papacy and Moravia can explain the insertion of Nicholas I into the *VM*. In the *VC*, it is noted that 'the pope' invites Cyril to Rome, and it is later clarified that this pope was Hadrian II, who welcomes Cyril.[171] In the *VM*, however, it is Nicholas I that invites the brothers, welcomes them, blesses their teaching, and places the Slavonic books on the altar of St Peter.[172] This has either been accepted as correct, or dismissed as a 'lapse of memory' on the part of the *VM* author as there is no evidence whatsoever that Nicholas made contact with Cyril.[173] Once again this discrepancy has

[171] *VC*, 17.1–2. [172] *VM*, 6.1.

[173] Accepted in, for example: Vlasto, *Entry of Slavs*, pp. 52–4; Istrin, *1100 let slavianskoi azbuki*, p. 33. Also accepted in Betti, who is mistaken in claiming that Nicholas is also mentioned in the *VC*, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, p. 62. Dismissed in: Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions*, p. 138.

not been considered as intentional. Yet inserting Nicholas in the narrative makes good sense, given the serious instability with which the textual community was faced. Another papal patron on the list could not hurt. A patron who was associated closely with missionary activity elsewhere and who, in part thanks to the efforts of John VIII, had acquired a status as eminent as Gregory the Great's right-hand man, would have no doubt appeared particularly appealing.[174] It is perhaps precisely due to this Gregorian association, that the *VM* chooses its words carefully; Nicholas wanted to see the brothers 'as angels of God' ('яко анъгєла божия'). Could this perhaps be an allusion to Gregory's famous exclamation upon first encountering slave boys from England, that they ought to be 'co-heirs with the angels of heaven'?[175]

Regardless, spreading the Moravian mission's support across Nicholas I and Hadrian II is a clear attempt to invent tradition by appealing to two highly respected and venerated pontiffs. In so doing, however, the *VM* distances the Moravian mission's activity and legitimacy from John VIII. Even when the text is clearly alluding to John VIII's letters to Frankish bishops asking that Methodios be released from imprisonment, it does not name the pope.[176] This consistent omission is best explained by an awareness amidst the textual community responsible for the text, that the legacy of John VIII in papal circles was far from uncontroversial. John VIII's rival Formosus, who he accused of striving for papal office in 876, and whose condemnation John repeatedly secured, was back in Rome immediately after the pope's probable assassination in 882 and may well have been on the papal throne by the time of the composition of the *VM*—that is, sometime between ca. 886 and ca. 907.[177] Thus, the silence of the *VM* is best read as a silence informed by the silence of the *Liber Pontificalis* and by the silence of the no longer extant section of John VIII's Register.

The *VM* emerged from a community that was readjusting to changing patronage. This meant that the *VM* as a document had, on the one hand, to prove that its community's papal loyalty was not reducible to John VIII's patronage, whilst on the other, to tackle the legalistic discourse of the Frankish authorities from which it had thus far been protected by papal patronage. To do so, the textual community reinvented the legacy of Cyril, whose own good reputation in the ninth-century papal court for bringing the relics of St Clement made him suitable for the *VM* author's purposes, but whose Byzantine imperialism and concern with education seemed of little relevance or interest. It also had to transform the textual and political legacy of Byzantine church councils, to put them to the service of the community's newly adopted papal primacy. Last but not least, it had to

[174] Discussed above in this chapter.

[175] 'et tales angelorum in caelis decet esse coheredes', Bede, *Historiam Ecclesiasticam Gentis Anglorum*, 2.1, http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/bede/bede2.shtml#2 (last accessed: September 2023).

[176] *VM*, 10.1–6.

[177] Leyser, 'The Memory of Gregory the Great', p. 196.

tinker with papal documents to provide evidence for its long-standing alliance with reputable Gregorian popes.

Although these may seem like radical textual interventions, it is worth pointing to one contemporary parallel. In his study of the *Life of Anskar*, discussed above, Eric Knibbs demonstrates how Rimbert, Anskar's successor, and his community forged a number of papal pallia grants in order to resolve the problem that Anskar was only appointed as archbishop to the see of Bremen, whilst Rimbert had been assigned to the see of Hamburg.[178] In so doing, the text uses double pallium grants, otherwise unattested, and forges a grant by Pope Nicholas I to create a previously unattested dual see of Hamburg-Bremen, two locations over sixty miles apart.[179] There is no founding document surviving for 'any diocese that emerges in the Carolingian period', and plenty of surviving documents from the register of Nicholas show the text to be using 'outright documentary forgery'.[180] This practice of forgery is much more radical than what we find in the *VM*. The care taken to produce a letter in plausible language, which communicates a position an actual pope did hold briefly, is a world away from the total invention of non-existent documents and previously unattested dual sees. But both the *Life of Anskar* and the *VM* belong to the same moment, of the late-ninth century, as authority became less and less centralised, and the papacy's relationship with Frankish missions was far from secure. As Knibbs puts it for the *Life of Anksar*, but as pertinent for the *VM*, it is in response to this instability, that 'these enterprising clerics fought for their own survival, and the survival of their institution by means of documentary deception', amongst other things.[181]

Conclusions

To conclude, there is no doubt that the *VM* is a text produced by a community stuck between a rock and a hard place. Rather than being a representation of these current affairs, however, it is best to consider the *VM* as a declaration, as defined in the work of the linguistic philosopher John Searle.[182] A declaration is an assertion of a particular state of affairs, which seeks to bring into existence that state of affairs. For instance, if someone standing before two bowls of soup were

[178] E. Knibbs, *Angsar, Rimbert and the Forged Foundations of Hamburg-Bremen* (Farnham, 2011), pp. 176–7.

[179] Ibid., pp. 4–6.

[180] Ibid., pp. 6, 198. More generally, see pp. 137–75.

[181] Ibid., p. 10. This was by no means the only text which was the product of such forgery. The corpus of Pseudo-Isidore's writings was also consolidated in the ninth century, blending decretals with the fictitious voices of former popes, to give the weight of age-old tradition to rulings on contemporary issues. See: C. Leyser, 'Episcopal Office in the Italy of Liudprand of Cremona, c.890–c.970', *English Historical Review*, 125 (2010), pp. 795–817, at p. 803.

[182] J. Searle, 'A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts', in his *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 149–51.

to point to one and say: 'this is your soup', then she would be trying to transform a neutral bowl of soup into a possessed one, and if 'you' proceed to eat from that bowl and not from the other, you have accepted the terms of the declaration, and the declaration has become valid.

The *VM* is a declaration of a number of things: that the Moravian mission is aligned with long-term papal practice; that its actors, Methodios, Cyril, and the Moravian community have always accepted papal primacy in ecclesiastical affairs; that there are clear and persuasive arguments for the legitimacy of Methodios against claims to the contrary by the Frankish ecclesiastical administration arousing from his and Cyril's personal relationship with the Slavs; and that therefore papal support ought to be continued by the election of Methodios' chosen successor, Gorazd.

To make these declarations, the *VM*'s author and their community adopted and adapted its sources from Greek and Latin, forging and amending papal documents, and transforming the Cyril of the *VC*, by sidelining his concern with rhetoric, disputation, and education, by forging a previously non-existent brotherly bond with Methodios, and by elevating the ethnic qualities of the mission to Moravia and the invention of the alphabet. This was the first instance in which inventing a Slavonic alphabet for a community of Slavs and using it in a religious context became a politically pertinent matter, and not simply an intellectual question as in the *VC*. The invention of Slavonic as it is here repurposed, remains instrumentalised in a wider conflict over ecclesiastical jurisdiction at the fringes of the Carolingian world.

A declaration need not be successful, nor does it have to be true. As far as the evidence permits us to say, the pope did not accept Gorazd as bishop to Moravia, and Frankish hegemony returned to the region with the appointment of Wiching, until the collapse of the Moravian polity by ca. 907. This short-lived trilingual community of educated clerics, therefore, was either subsumed in Latin hegemony or expelled.

Nonetheless, in the aftermath of the Moravian mission, the story of the invention of Slavonic, in both the *VC* and the *VM* versions, was transmitted southward to the Balkans. There, some of the two texts' most central declarations, interventions, and arguments became irrelevant once again, but others proved to be useful ammunition for particular contemporary intellectual debates in early tenth-century Bulgaria. It is to this next phase in the process of inventing, contesting, and reframing the invention of Slavonic and its key actors Cyril and Methodios that I turn to in the final part of this book.

PART THREE

DEFENDING SLAVONIC

7

Where Not to Start

Slavonic in Balkan History

As mentioned at the end of the last chapter, sometime either after the ban on Slavonic liturgy by Pope Stephen V in 890 or around the 907 collapse of the Moravian polity, the Slavonic alphabet arrived in the Balkans. This last part of the book follows the alphabet from Central to South-Eastern Europe.

It is worth noting that the memory of the missions recorded in the *VC* and *VM* was not totally lost in Moravia, and was transmitted northwards to Bohemia and Poland.[1] However, the dissemination and use of the Slavonic alphabet in tenth-century Moravia, Bohemia, and Poland remain contested.[2] The earliest original compositions from Bohemia, largely legends concerning the Přemyslid dynasty and especially their ruler Václav/Wenceslas and his grandmother Ludmila, were composed first in Latin and then translated into Slavonic, or were composed only in Latin.[3]

By contrast, a corpus of Greek-to-Slavonic translations can be more or less firmly located within the bounds of the late ninth- and early tenth-century Balkans, and amongst them a much smaller, but nonetheless significant corpus of original compositions in Slavonic.[4] These texts discuss the questions of translation,

[1] See: F. Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions amongst the Slavs, SS Constantine and Methodius* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1970), (Western Slavs) pp. 194–229, (Eastern Slavs) pp. 230–59; A. Vlasto, *The Entry of the Slavs into Christendom: An Introduction to the Medieval History of the Slavs* (Cambridge, 1970), (Western Slavs) pp. 86–142, (Eastern Slavs) pp. 187–207; S. Barlieva, 'The Cult of Saints Cyril and Methodios: The Phenomenon of Shared Identity in the Slavic World', in M. Gray, ed., *Rewriting Holiness: Reconfiguring Vitae, Re-Signifying Cults* (London, 2017), pp. 229–41.

[2] The same scholars can express more or less confidence in how widespread it was. A more sceptical assessment: P. Sommer and D. Třeštik, 'Bohemia and Moravia', in N. Berend, ed., *Christianisation and the Rise of Christian Monarchy: Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus' c.900–1200* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 233–4. A more positive assessment: P. Sommer, 'Saint Procopius and the Sázava Monastery', in Kouřil, ed., *The Cyril and Methodius Mission and Europe*, pp. 296–9. On the interesting developments of the memory of Cyril and Methodios in thirteenth-century Bohemia see: M. Wihoda, 'The Tradition of Saints Cyril and Methodios in the Memory of the Přemyslid Era', in Kouřil ed., *The Cyril and Methodius Mission and Europe*, pp. 310–14.

[3] Sommer, Třeštik, 'Bohemia and Moravia', p. 249.

[4] These will be introduced and discussed at length in Chapter 9. The area I loosely refer to as the Balkans here and throughout this book takes modern-day Albania and Northern Macedonia as its western border, the Black Sea as its eastern border, the Carpathian Mountains on the north and the Aegean coast from Thessaloniki eastwards to Istanbul as its southern border. The surviving epigraphic evidence from the tenth century clusters in the south west (between modern-day North Macedonia and Albania) and in the north east (in the Danube region between modern-day Bulgaria and Romania). Locating texts surviving in manuscripts is a trickier task, however, so I have chosen a wider

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the Slavonic alphabet, and at times evoke Cyril, Methodios, and Moravia, even if they mostly lack the kind of information of interest to historians of high politics.

This corpus of texts is the earliest record of an intellectual milieu of scribes working in Slavonic and offering a polyphony of contemporary voices on similar issues.[5] This community was distinctly bilingual, working in both Slavonic and Greek. Of course, 'all literate technologies to one degree or another are embedded within structures of privilege, access, textual codes, and literacy education'.[6] Thus, this part of the book therefore can ultimately offer insight into this privileged bilingual milieu, or literate social class. But written text was disseminated orally, and literacy was a complex sliding scale, so the ideas and decisions made by this milieu could 'influence the illiterate and quasi-literate as well as those who can read and write'.[7] Thus the ideas about writing, formulated and formalised by this intellectual circle, could have had profound consequences for the spread and use of Slavonic across South-Eastern and North-Eastern Europe.

Once again, however, it is important to start with historiography: or what I call here, where not to start. This chapter seeks to highlight two already-assumed contexts which have shaped the study of the text which will be the focus of the next two chapters, *On Letters*, as well as the other texts which emerge from the Balkans at the turn of the tenth century.

In the absence of a Slavonic chronicle tradition, studies of the arrival of Slavonic literacy in the Balkans at the turn of the tenth century, and thus of *On Letters* and other contemporary texts, have been framed by two main kinds of context. The first and backbone historical account is found in the eleventh-century Greek *Life of Clement* which survives under the name of Theophylact of Ohrid, but which scholars largely accept drew on older, possibly Slavonic-language material.[8] This has been supplemented by tenth-century Byzantine sources, even though, as noted throughout this book, they have nothing to say about the Slavonic alphabet in particular.[9] Using these sources, scholars have

geographic area to permit contemplating production outside of known monastic and imperial centres. For the inscriptions' distribution, see: K. Popkonstantinov and O. Kronsteiner eds., *Altbulgarische Inschriften*, vol. 1 (Salzburg, 1994).

[5] By contrast, the number of texts surviving which can safely be dated to Moravia is highly contentious, as discussed in the Introduction. See: A. Turilov, 'K izucheniiu velikomoravskogo literaturnogo naslediia: promezhutochye itogi, spornye voprosy i perspektivy', *Vestnik slavianskikh kul'tur*, 1 (2015), pp. 130–52.

[6] M. Amsler, *Affective Literacies: Writing and Multilingualism in the Late Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2011), p. xvii.

[7] B. Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, NJ, 1983), p. 7.

[8] Theophylact of Ohrid, *The Life of Clement*, in *Grutskite zhitiia na Kliment Okhridski: Uvod, tekst, prevod i obiasnitelni belezhki*, ed., trans. A. Milev (Sofia, 1966), pp. 76–163.

[9] The sources from Byzantium are mostly chronicle accounts of Symeon's wars with Byzantium, and the letters of Patriarch Nicholas Mystikos to the ruler during these wars. For the most thorough chronicle narrative see: Symeon the Logothete, *Chronicle*, in *Symeonis magistri et logothetae chronicon*, ed. S. Wahlgren (Berlin, 2006); *The Chronicle of the Logothete*, trans. S. Wahlgren (Liverpool, 2019); Nicholas Mystikos, *Letters*, eds., trans., R. Jenkins and L. Westerink (Washington, DC, 1973), esp. Letters 3–31.

consolidated a reified object, the Bulgarian state, which is either treated as an actor in its own right, or as one anthropomorphised in Symeon, its ruler (ca. 897–927); this state is then regarded as responsible for the conscious preservation of the Slavonic alphabet and culture. The Bulgarian state, when conceived thus, is the second kind of context which has shaped the study of *On Letters*. In turn, I offer a critique of the use of the *Life of Clement* to frame our understanding of *On Letters*, and a more general critique of the objectification of the Bulgarian state or its people as agents in this wider narrative of preservation.

The Life of Clement

The *Life of Clement* is often used to explain or contextualise the tenth-century texts mentioned above, as it offers a narrative account of the Cyrillo-Methodian mission's arrival in the Balkans after the expulsion of Slavonic from Moravia.[10] Yet, rather as the *VM* restructures information about the mission to Moravia from the *VC* to its own ends, the *Life of Clement* significantly reframes the Moravian mission and its arrival in the Balkans, in light of what are clearly eleventh-century concerns.

The *Life of Clement* as it survives was authored by Theophylact of Ohrid, the eleventh-century Byzantine court intellectual who wrote about his time in Ohrid as exile.[11] This complex text clearly does have earlier, perhaps Slavonic language, sources.[12] These may be the *VC* and *VM* and/or an earlier *Life of Clement* which used the *VC* and *VM* as sources.[13] The narrative voice oscillates between regarding the Slavs as 'us' and as 'them'.[14] This is further complicated by the ethnicisation of the Slavonic peoples and their language as Bulgarians, rather than Slavs, and the assertion that Methodios baptised Boris himself.[15] Such ethnic relabelling is a radical departure from the materials we can safely date to the early tenth century, where the most common label used to name and categorise is Slavs and not Bulgarians.[16] This relabelling has often been put at the feet of the perceived source text, but it seems just as plausible that Theophylact's own hand could have made

[10] E.g. Vlasto, *Entry of Slavs*, pp. 168–9; Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions*, p. 245; Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth*, pp. 95–6. All switch to the *Life of Clement* as their main narrative source when *VC/VM* run out. It is also often the backbone narrative into which the short *Life of Naum* is plugged. See: M. Kuseff, 'St Nahum', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 29 (1950), pp. 139–52, pp. 142–3 (text).

[11] See: M. Mullett, *Theophylact of Ohrid: Reading the Letters of a Byzantine Archbishop* (Birmingham, 1997), pp. 43–69.

[12] Theophylact, *Life of Clement*, pp. 76–147.

[13] It presents Cyril as a scholar and Methodios as an institutional bishop, as do their two *vitae*, e.g. ibid. 2.4.

[14] 'Us' when discussing the students of Clement of Ohrid, ibid. 18.58. 'Them' when treating the Bulgarians, their dark land, their rough language, and their wild and unlearned nature, etc.: ibid. 2.5, 2.6. 21.63.

[15] E.g. ibid. 2.6, 4.15–16.

[16] This will be discussed in depth in below.

the change in line with Byzantine administrative tutelage, and his own position as patriarch of all Bulgaria.

It is clear that much of the *Life of Clement* as it survives today has been reorganised around the subsequent eleventh-century context, and in particular the 1054 split between the Eastern and Western churches over the *filioque*.[17] Although the *filioque* was already an issue of contention in the ninth century, it does not feature in the *VC* and *VM*.[18] The *Life of Clement* reframes Methodios and his disciples as bastions of Byzantine theology, arguing for the Chalcedonian position in brand-new staged debates with Latin opponents.[19] The fact that some of their words in these debates have extremely close textual parallels in Theophylact's own treatise against the Latins and that no other tenth-century Balkan sources in Slavonic reveal a preoccupation with the *filioque*, strongly point to the likelihood that the anti-Latin sentiment in the *Life of Clement* was Theophylact's own.[20] The *Life of Clement* frames the exodus from Moravia as a doctrinal issue, but in light of doctrine as it had solidified by the eleventh century.[21] As such it offers little insight into our inquiry. Thus, whilst I accept that Slavonic writing did arrive in the Balkans and at the Bulgarian court most probably through clerics and scribes from Moravia, sometime in the late ninth or early tenth century, I will withhold judgement on the precise way this occurred.

Once the alphabet does arraive in the Balkans, the dominant scholarly narrative of the birth of Slavonic culture, presented in both political and scholarly common-sense narratives, which unify the *VC* and *VM* as texts, and Cyril and Methodios as a sacred pair, does not conclude. This established story continues in the medieval Bulgarian polity, which popular and scholarly discourse, both within and without Bulgaria, considers as a crucial period for the preservation of Slavonic culture. This common-sense takes it as a given that the various groups of actors involved in the adoption and adaption of Slavonic in the Balkans had a shared mission of conscious preservation, and a shared idea of what Slavonic meant and what it was for.

Medieval Bulgaria's role in the universal narrative of Slavonic culture, is perhaps best represented by *The Slav Epic* ('Slovanská epopej'). This cycle of twenty monumental canvas paintings (the largest at over six by eight metres) by Czech Art Nouveau artist Alfons Mucha, made between 1910 and 1928, represents nineteen key moments in the history of Slavonic peoples, and one futuristic

[17] Theophylact, *Life of Clement*, 4.17, 8.25.

[18] This was probably due to the fact, that unlike the Frankish churches, the papacy had not made its position clear until the turn of the tenth century and was therefore not the target of heretical claims in the early texts, as discussed by Tia Kolbaba, *Inventing Latin Heretics: Byzantines and the Filioque in the Ninth Century* (Kalamazoo, MI, 2008), esp. p. 153.

[19] Theophylact, *Life of Clement*, 8.25, 16.47–52.

[20] See: Milev, *Grutskite Zhitiia*, p. 47.

[21] Theophylact, *Life of Clement*, 12.35–39.

concluding piece entitled 'Slavs for Humanity'.[22] The first few paintings deal with the period that concerns us. The opening two, 'Slavs in their Original Homeland' and 'The Celebration of Svantovit' (a supposedly pre-Christian rite), present dark and moody mythological scenes, where Slavs face current or oncoming disaster before their supposed mass migration southward. Scene three, 'The Introduction of Slavonic Liturgy in Great Moravia', depicts a major shift in colour and mood. The wild natural scenes steeped in deep blue are replaced by a bright palatial courtyard. Prince Rastislav sits on a throne before a priest reading a letter which confirms Methodios' legitimation by the pope. Methodios stands to the side flanked by two followers. It is clear that Mucha considers this the birth of a victorious Slavonic culture.

The next scene is entitled 'Tsar Symeon I of Bulgaria', and once again presents a bright and warm-coloured palatial scene. This time, a lavish palace interior frames the tsar in old age sitting pensively on his throne and reading from an open manuscript. A court full of scribes sits before him, frantically writing and reading pieces of parchment on the marble floor and its fine carpets. This is the preservation of Slavonic literature, and the refuge for the Cyrillo-Methodian mission directed by Bulgaria as state, embodied in Symeon as ruler *par excellence*.

As I have sought to show throughout this book, the popular, the fanciful, the political, and the scholarly are deeply intertwined in the study of the invention of Slavonic. This twentieth-century imagining of the legendary Cyril and Methodios fading to be replaced by a state-based and leader-centred preservation effort is not far removed from the language of academic literature. A recent study by Rumen Daskalov has brilliantly shown the development of this nationalist and later socialist narrative with all its nuances in the history of Bulgarian scholarship.[23] Aside from a brief interlude in the aftermath of the Second World War, scholarship has consistently equated the state with the people, and thus centred it at the heart of historical action. But this narrative was not maintained only from within Bulgaria. In the words of the Czech scholar Francis Dvornik, 'the work of Constantine-Cyril and Methodios, rejected by the west, was saved by the Bulgarians'.[24] The Russian scholar Boris Floria notes that the task of preserving Slavonic 'was only completed successfully and fully in Bulgaria. The First Bulgarian Kingdom became the main hearth from which Slavonic writing and Slavonic literature were spread to other countries.'[25]

[22] The paintings were on display in Moravský Krumlov until 2012, when they were moved into the Veletržní Palace in Prague, the city to which Mucha bestowed them, where they remained until 2016. They spent May–December 2019 in Brno, and are, at the time of writing, not on display. For the full images see: http://muchafoundation.org/gallery/themes/theme/slav-epic/ (last accessed, September 2023). I am grateful to Dr Alexandra Vukovich for bringing this to my attention.

[23] R. Daskalov, *Master Narratives of the Middle Ages in Bulgaria* (Leiden, 2021), esp. pp. 209–41.

[24] Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions*, p. 244.

[25] 'успешно и в полном объеме была решена лишь в Болгарии. Первое Болгарское царство стало тем главныым очагом, откуда славянская письменость и славянская литература стали проникать в другие страны', B. Floria, *Skazaniia o nachale slavianskoi pis'mennosti* (2nd ed., St Petersburg, 2000), p. 105.

The most complete iteration of this thinking is found in the words of French Slavicist Roger Bernard from a 1963 speech in Paris, later published in a Bulgarian translation as the preface to a scholarly publication under the title 'Giants in Spirit':[26]

> Но една млада държава, привлякла вниманието на средновековния свят с военните си победи, постъпи благородно и мъдро, като приети прогонените ученици на Кирил и Методий, повечето от които в същност бяха нейни чеда. Тази държава съхрани и подклаждаше пламъка, който двамата братя бяха запалили, за да предаде по-късно този пламък на останалите славянски народи и на бъдещите поколения. Тази държава беше България. Поради благородното си поведение и значимостта на наследството, което тя спаси, България си спечели неувяхващата благодарност на останалите славянски народи и уважението на целия цивилизован свят.[27]
>
> But a young country, which had attracted the attention of the medieval world with its military successes, acted nobly and wisely, when it gave shelter to the banished students of Cyril and Methodios, most of whom were in fact its own children. This country preserved and fuelled the flame, which the two brothers had lit, in order to pass on this flame later to the other Slavonic peoples and to future generations. This country was Bulgaria. Due to its noble behaviour and the significance of the inheritance which it saved, Bulgaria won the unfading gratitude of the rest of the Slavonic people and the respect of the whole civilised world.

This discourse relies on two ideological manoeuvres. The first is the unification of Cyril and Methodios, their purpose and mission, into one flame. As I have sought to demonstrate, this unification is not warranted by the surviving texts, but rather is an invention of the later *VM*, as part of a wider project to make acceptable and legitimate the position of Methodios before the papacy's changing policy. This papal agenda is lost in the narrative presented above. The second is the formalisation of the unit of (medieval) Bulgaria as an object in history, and then the reification of this object as a (cultural) agent in its own right in the history of Slavonic culture. This historical object or agent, responsible for 'saving' or 'preserving' or 'fuelling' the Slavonic flame is at times personified by its rulers Boris, or in Mucha's paintings Symeon, and is at other equated times more generically with the state, the 'kingdom' ('tsarstvo') in the words of Floria or 'country' ('durzhava') in the translated words of Bernard.

This objectification of medieval Bulgaria, as the second phase of the birth of Slavonic culture, is just as uncritical as the unification of Cyril and Methodios as a

[26] R. Bernard, 'Velikani na dukha', in B. Kastelov et al., eds. *Bulgaristika i Bulgaristi: statii Statii i izsledvaniia, bulgaristikata v chuzhbina, portreti na bulgaristi* (Sofia, 1981), pp. 25–33.

[27] Ibid., p. 28.

holy, ideologically aligned pair. The overall narrative summarised by Bernard fails to engage closely and critically with the textual monuments from the early medieval Balkans which are called upon to support this monolithic story, as individual contributions to a complex and versatile intellectual and political life. As I have shown, in the case of the *VC* and *VM*, this failure to address these monuments on their own terms has had the consequence of disguising the specific agendas of each text and their fundamental difference, and thus significantly oversimplifying early medieval intellectual culture in Central and South-Eastern Europe.

I take the same to be the case here: that the term Bulgaria and its use in scholarship, especially interchangeably with Symeon, has, in striving to preserve continuity, disguised a complex and multi-vocal intellectual culture. This is not to say that Symeon was not literate, or not responsible for patronising translations at his court.[28] Rather, it is to make two points of caution. The first is to assert that even if dedicated to a ruler, individual texts cannot be assumed to have an agenda interchangeable with that of the ruler, or of that ruler's state. Such reductionism is unthinkable in the works of, say Bede, whose *Ecclesiastical History* would never be reduced to King Ceolwulf or the Kingdom of Northumbria, or Thomas Aquinas, whose *On Kingship* would never be mistaken as at one with the position of the text's dedicatee and patron, the King of Cyprus.[29] And the second is to challenge the readiness with which scholars attribute texts which have no textual link to Symeon, to his influence, or to his personal agenda.[30]

As a corrective to the readiness to attribute agency to Symeon and equate it with the state, I refer to texts which do not contain a direct link to the ruler in their preface as emerging from the Balkans rather than Bulgaria as a state or Symeon's vision as a person. This may appear contrived or extreme, but it is occasioned by the particularity of scholarship concerning medieval Bulgaria. The fact that the word 'Bulgaria' was used in the Middle Ages and is used today is a great source of pride for the modern Bulgarian state and central to scholarly ideas about the medieval origins of the modern Bulgarian people. The term is quite

[28] Much of his correspondence survives from the Greek side, as do a few short letters in the Byzantine bureaucrat Leo Choerosphaktes' collection, which are assigned to Symeon, and scholars generally accept as his own, see Leo Choerosphaktes, *Letters*, 1, 3, 5, in *FLHB*, vol. 8, pp. 176–8.

[29] Bede, *Historiam Ecclesiasticam Gentis Anglorum*, http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/bede/bede2.shtml#2 (last accessed: September 2023), Praefatio; Thomas Aquinas, *On Kingship (To the King of Cyprus)*, Proemium, in *S. Thomae Aquinatis Doctoris Angelici Opuscula Theologica,* eds. R. Verardo, R. Spiazzi, and M. Calcaterra (Torino, 1954), p. 257.

[30] See, for instance, this very recent attempt to suggest Cyrillic was in fact Symeon's own idea: Kh. Trendafilov, 'Symeon v Pliska', *Preslavska knizhovna shkola*, 17 (2017), pp. 177–92, at p. 183. This elevation of Symeon is somewhat akin to the way authorial agency and control is attributed to Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos in the field of Byzantine studies, yet Symeon lacks a reassessment as damning as: I. Ševčenko, 'Re-reading Constantine Porphyrogenitos', in J. Shepard and S. Franklin, eds., *Byzantine Diplomacy* (Aldershot, 1992), pp. 167–95. The question of Constantine's literacy and literary output is still being debated; most recently see: N. Gaul et al., eds., *Center, Province and Periphery in the Age of Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos: From De Ceremoniis to De Administrando Imperio* (Wiesbaden, 2018).

unlike other labels found in the book. Moravia is now a largely geographic label for a region in the Czech Republic, whilst its medieval location remains contested. Byzantium was an antiquarian label referring to the old city of Constantinople in the Middle Ages, and a different kind of antiquarian label from the Renaissance onwards referring to the East Roman Empire as a whole. The Bulgaria of the tenth century, by contrast, is accepted and assumed to be the progenitor of the Bulgaria of the twentieth. How pervasive this continuity is can be seen in the 1981 statewide celebrations '1300 Years Bulgaria' ('1300 Години България'), which led to the production of a large body of scholarship alongside several architectural constructions, eighty documentary films, and various country-wide exhibitions on Bulgarian history.[31] The key monument of this celebration was a large statue entitled '1300 Years Bulgaria', erected in the centre of Bulgaria's capital, Sofia, in 1981. It was divided into three scenes, which moved forward in time and told the story of 'Bulgaria'. It stood in the city's central public square until 2017.[32]

The scene representing the present was an elevated male figure standing upright on the left-hand side of the monument. It depicted a victorious worker, and more broadly the idealised body of the Bulgarian socialist citizen. The middle scene represented a *pietà,* a variation on the representation of the lamentation of Christ by the Virgin Mary, except here it is a lamentation for the Bulgarians lost in wars and uprisings against Ottoman rule. If the present is the worker, and the past a lament for the Bulgarian state's absence under Ottoman rule, it is perhaps no surprise to see how the origins of the Bulgarian state and its 1,300 years of history were depicted in the lower right-hand side of the monument: 'Tsar Symeon and the Golden Age of Bulgarian Literature' portrayed the ruler standing over scribes, laying the foundations of Bulgarian literature.

To use the state label, Bulgaria, and the cultural and ethnic homogeneity it evokes in popular discourse, therefore, is unsatisfactory when one studies the complex, multilingual intellectual production of the Balkans, and Central and Eastern Europe more broadly. I have sought to show throughout this book that polities in the early medieval world, and especially in Central and Eastern Europe, are not useful guides to the substance of cultural production. Thus, throughout

[31] The 1,300 years start with 681, the date of a peace treatise between Asparukh and Constantine IV, shortly after the arrival of one branch of the Turkic steppe Bulgar tribe in the Danube region, recorded in rather mystical terms in: Theophanes, *Chronicle*, 357–8. The following are just a small selection of scholarly works commissioned for the occasion: N. Kovachev, ed., *1300 godini Bulgarska durzhava: Dokladi i suobshteniia ot nauchna konferentsiia provedena na 5 i 6 noemvri 1981 g. v chest na 1300 godishninata na Bulgarskata durzhava* (Veliko Turnovo, 1982); G. Bogdanov, *1300 Godini Bulgariia: Tematichna preporuchitelna bibliografiia* (Sofia, 1973); D. Cholakova et al., eds., *Bulgariia 1300: sbornik ot metodichni i bibliografski materiali* (Plovdiv, 1980); B. Cholpanov, *I Nii sme dali neshto na sveta: 1300 godini Bulgariia* (Sofia, 1972). On the films, exhibitions, and other celebrations, see: I. Kunchev, 'Proektut 1300 godini Bulgariia—raztochitelna gradnomaniia ili nevizhdano kulturno dostizheniie?', 16 April 2016, https://bulgarianhistory.org/1300bulgaria/ (last accessed: September 2023).

[32] 'Pametnikut pred NDK otide v istoriiata', 28 July 2017, https://frognews.bg/novini/pametnikat-pred-ndk-otide-istoriiata.html (last accessed: September 2023).

this chapter I retain the label 'Bulgaria' when a text relates to the court or ruler, recognising that Symeon clearly did concern himself with commissioning Slavonic text but maintain this to be a distinctly medieval Bulgaria. Elsewhere I opt for the Balkans, as an explicitly politicised recognition of the region's mixed ethnic and linguistic population. This term is no less constructed, and only one of a number of contenders to describe the space discussed here. I stick with the Balkans over South-Eastern Europe or Eastern Europe, however, in part because of its robust critical historiography, and in part due to what Diana Mishkova has shown to be the obfuscation caused by the recent trend to excessively stress the European-ness of the region.[33]

[33] See the classic study: M. Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford, 2nd ed., 2009) and the more recent, D. Mishkova, *Beyond Balkanism: The Scholarly Politics of Region Making* (Abingdon, 2018), already discussed elsewhere in this book.

8

A Case for Slavonic

The Earliest Defence of the Alphabet

This chapter will focus on *On Letters*, a treatise attributed to the Monk Khrabur (or Khrabr), and the first surviving text dedicated entirely to a defence of the Slavonic alphabet explicitly against the Greek alphabet.[1] This will lay the ground for Chapter 9, which will explore the wider corpus of texts that can be dated to the late ninth- and early tenth-century Balkans. I use these texts as sources for intellectual history, reflecting varied and changing ideas about writing in Slavonic, the alphabet and its use in the early medieval Balkans. As elsewhere in this book, it is my purpose to destabilise the consolidated narrative of the birth of Slavonic culture and to offer instead an alternative narrative, of the continued contestation and transformation of the Slavonic alphabet and ideas about its use and purpose over the ninth and tenth centuries.

This chapter is divided into two sections of textual analysis. The first is a study of sources not too dissimilar to ones performed in Chapters 2 and 5. In the second section, I assess the main argument of *On Letters*. I demonstrate that the author frames Slavonic and its invention as more sacred than that of Greek by elevating the sanctity of Cyril, on the one hand, and abstracting the act of invention event on the other. This abstraction involves the distancing of Cyril from his ethnic and linguistic markers, as we find them in the *VC* and *VM*, and the distancing of the invention itself from the specific historical circumstances we find in our other texts. In this way, I argue that *On Letters* is a radical departure from the *VC* and *VM* and that its author transforms the legend of Slavonic invention. The text shifts the focus away from missionary activity, an issue central both to the *VC* and *VM* in different ways, towards the questions about the history of language and alphabet creation. In Chapter 9, I explore why and how these questions were pertinent in the early medieval Balkans. Once again, I offer a precis of the text and its contents to guide the reader.

The treatise *On Letters* is one of a handful of original compositions datable to late ninth- or early tenth-century Bulgaria. Scholarly consensus, with which

[1] Despite the large number of editions of *On Letters*, I cite the most recent one by Veder throughout and use the numbering he provides, but often render the English myself. I have referred to the other major editions and will note them only if there are discrepancies when discussing word choice. *On Letters* in W. Veder, *Utrum in alterum abiturum erat? A Study of the Beginnings of Text Transmission in Church Slavic* (Indiana, 1999), pp. 159–67.

Inventing Slavonic: Cultures of Writing between Rome and Constantinople. Mirela Ivanova, Oxford University Press.
 DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780198891505.003.0009

I agree, has settled on sometime between 897 and 927 for philological reasons, but also due to the fact that defending the alphabet against Greek makes most sense in an early medieval Balkan context.[2] Where exactly the text was written remains a matter of contention. In contrast with the brief accounts of the invention of Slavonic, which we find in the *VC* and *VM*, *On Letters* is the earliest surviving text to deal entirely and completely with the Slavonic alphabet. Under 3,000 words in length, the text opens with a summary of the invention of Slavonic letters by Constantine-Cyril. It then asserts the Slavonic alphabet's superior sanctity by comparing it to the history of the Greek alphabet's compilation. It offers a list of all Slavonic letters, before turning to a more polemical format of question and answer, defending the alphabet from a number of aggressors who argue the alphabet was not sacred, either because it was not one of the alphabets to be found on the cross of Christ, or because it continued to change over time.[3]

In some manuscripts, including the earliest dated *Laurentian Codex* of 1348, the text is attributed to the Monk Khrabur (or Khrabr in Russian spelling). In the vast majority of others from the fifteenth century onwards it is assigned to Constantine-Cyril, and in the rest to no author.[4] Even so, no information concerning the author survives outside the treatise, and the name itself could simply be the short adjective 'brave' ('храбръ', i.e. the brave monk). In part due to the possibility that 'Khrabur' may or may not be a name, historians have argued that Khrabur was in fact any one of the handful of named figures who tower over the anonymous mass that is early medieval Bulgaria: the Cyrillo-Methodian disciple Clement of Ohrid; the court translator John the Exarch; the monk Duks who transcribed Constantine of Preslav's translation *Four Orations Against the Arians*; and even Symeon himself (more evidence to the attempts to equate Bulgarian literate culture with the state and tsar).[5] There are, however, no obvious textual

[2] For a comprehensive summary of the dating debates: Kuev, *Chernorizets*, pp. 20–38; more recently, and for the *terminus ante quem*: Veder, *Utrum in alterum*, pp. 179–82.

[3] This list of letters is missing in the earliest surviving manuscript. B. Floria, *Skazaniia o nachale slavianskoi pis'mennosti* (2nd ed., St Petersburg, 2000), pp. 109–10.

[4] The name Chernorizets Khrabur appears in only eight of the seventy-three manuscript attestations of the text for which Kuev produces full editions, including the 1348 Laurentian Codex and two fifteenth-century codices, the Moscow and the Sava. Already in the fifteenth century, however, an alternative attribution developed to Constantine-Cyril, as in the Chudov Manuscripts N.269, and this became the dominant attribution into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. More manuscripts of the text have come to light since Kuev's study and are used by Veder in his critical edition, but these are usually later attestations and do not disrupt the general dominance of Constantine-Cyril. Kuev, *Chernorizets*, pp. 185–418.

[5] Here are just a few examples. Clement: F. Snopek, *Apoštolové slovanští Konstantin-Cyrill a Methoděj: slovo odvety universitnímu professoru dru. Brücknerovi* (Prague, 1913). John the Exarch: G. A. Il'inskii, 'Kto byl chernorizets Khrabr?', *Vizantiiskoe Obozrenie*, 3 (1917), pp. 152–6. Doks: E. Georgiev, *Raztsvetut na Bulgarskata literatura v IX-Xv.* (Sofia, 1962), pp. 312–14. Symeon was most avidly proposed by Bulgarian scholar V. Zlatarski, 'Koi e bil Chernorizets Khrabur?', in *Istoriia na Bulgarskata durzhava prez srednite vekove*, vol. 1.2: *Ot slavianizatsiata na Bulgarskata durzhava do padaneto na purvoto tsarstvo (852–1018)* (3rd ed., Sofia, 1995), pp. 820–9. And more recently, Kh. Trendafilov, 'Symeon v Pliska', *Preslavska knizhovna shkola*, 17 (2017), pp. 177–92, at p. 185.

reasons to reduce the author of *On Letters* to any of these named individuals. As with the *VC* and *VM*, I prefer to avoid assigning anonymous texts to known authors and to stress the multi-vocal nature of medieval intellectual culture. Throughout, as with the *VC* and *VM*, I shall simply refer to 'the author' as the kind of functional term discussed in the methodological addenda to the introduction. My purpose is to make arguments *for* the kind of community that may have produced this text on the basis of textual analysis, rather than to start *from* a predetermined community or person and seek to understand the text through them. I also avoid the use of Khrabur, as a name, due to both the small number of manuscripts that transmit and the moralising character that its meaning, 'brave', has added to discussions of the author.[6] I leave it to the reader, after a close study of the text and its contemporary context, to decide whether or not the author and their textual community were, in fact, brave.

Perhaps due to the text's uniqueness, *On Letters* was extraordinarily popular in the pre-modern Slavonic-speaking world.[7] It survives in over a hundred manuscripts from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century and has been estimated by Kuev to be the single most copied non-liturgical text from the ninth- and tenth-century Balkans. With liturgical texts included, Kuev places it either second or third, after a homily in praise of Michael and Gabriel (roughly a hundred and fifty manuscripts) and roughly equal to a homily in praise of Lazarus (roughly a hundred manuscripts) both attributed to Clement of Ohrid.[8] It is worth dwelling on this popularity a little.

The treatise *On Letters*, regardless of the accuracy or intentional inaccuracy of the way it portrays the invention of the alphabet with respect to the versions of the story transmitted in the *VC* and *VM*, became the most widespread pre-modern text about the invention of Slavonic. Present in over a hundred manuscripts, it has a circulation over twice that of the *VC* (at forty-eight manuscripts) and over six times that of the *VM* (at fifteen). More pertinently still, most of the manuscripts in which the text is found are full of other grammatical or philological treatises concerned with Slavonic writing, at least thirty-seven according to Khristo Trendafilov's count. The text makes it into some of the earliest (in this instance seventeenth-century) Russian *bukvari*, or textbooks designated to enable readers to acquire literacy.[9] This meant that for many late medieval and early

[6] It is possible this moralising character was the product of the fourteenth-century context of our earliest manuscript, or an earlier myth or legend.

[7] As noted in the Introduction, this rather clunky 'pre-modern' label, in the sense of pre-modernist, is used specifically in this context to demarcate the before and after of the so-called 'rediscovery' of the *VC*, *VM*, *On Letters* and other medieval texts by the first wave of nineteenth-century professional scholars, interested in scientifically revealing medieval Slavonic history.

[8] Kuev, *Chernorizets*, p. 182.

[9] Kh. Trendafilov, 'Skazanie za bukvite na Chertnorizets Khrabur: retseptsiia i funktsiia', in *Vtori mezhdunaroden kongres po bulgariskita, Sofiia 23 Mai – 3 Iuni, Dokladi 11: Stara bulgarska literatura* (Sofia, 1987), pp. 92–4.

modern East Slavonic readers, an engagement with *On Letters* would have predated and shaped their encounter with most other written literature, including the *VC* and *VM*. Whatever the argument of *On Letters* and the author's purpose, therefore, it is worth bearing in mind that this rendition of the invention of Slavonic would become relatively hegemonic amongst pre-modern readers at least by the seventeenth century. This hegemony has no doubt affected modern scholars' opinions of how widespread or dominant the text's position was in the ninth or tenth century.

Its later significance notwithstanding, the text and its anonymous author have received far less historical than philological attention. The mention of *On Letters* is often brief in key historical works such as those of Dvornik, Vlasto, or Curta, and usually integrated into a wider narrative based on the *Life of Clement* and Byzantine chronicles, as discussed above.[10] Philological studies, on the other hand, centred entirely on the text are in abundance. In the twentieth century alone, the text received one monograph with seventy-three individual manuscript editions, one monograph of a critical edition based on eighty manuscript attestations, and another critical edition that drew on eighty-three attestations.[11] At fewer than 3,000 words, it may well be the Slavonic text with the highest ratio of scholarship per word of primary source.

Given that the genre of the text does not lend itself to narrative history, scholars have been more willing to accept and label *On Letters* as a polemic that puts ideas forward than to consider the *VC* or *VM* as such.[12] These ideas, however, have been treated by scholarship more akin to medieval exegesis than critical assessment, with inaccuracies excused or corrected, but rarely explained. The overwhelming assumption has remained that, as it defends Cyril and the letters he invented, the text is in some sense a continuator of the Cyrillo-Methodian mission and its supposedly coherent objectives.[13] To my knowledge, only once in the vast body of work on the text has the suggestion surfaced that the treatise's critique and defence may be purely rhetorical.[14] Exegetic study has been especially prominent in work on the sources of *On Letters*. In what follows I offer the first

[10] See: Chapter 7.

[11] In seventy-three individual editions in Kuev, *Chernorizets*, pp. 185–419; critically reconstructed from eighty attestations in *Chernorizets Khrabur: O Pismeneh*, ed. A. Dzhambeluka-Kosova (dictionary) and E. Dogramadzhieva (Sofia, 1980); and once again from eighty-three attestations in Veder, *Utrum*. Another monographic study of *On Letters* was published in this period, with a translation and commentary, but it used earlier critical editions: D. Petkanova, *Chernorizets Khrabur* (Sofia, 1984; 2nd ed., Sofia, 1999).

[12] For instance: Georgiev, *Raztsvetut,* pp. 317–21. Vlasto, *The Entry of Slavs*, p. 177. Petkanova, *Chernorizets*, pp. 62–75.

[13] An excellent example of this exegetical style of study is the diligent work of Kuev, which is entirely devoted to a historical and philological explanation of the text, its production, the dating system it uses, and the potential sources it may have used. This is a profoundly useful study. Yet no critical assessment of the arguments, alongside the corpus of literature about Slavonic is to be found here: Kuev, *Chernorizets*, esp. pp. 38–46. See also: Petkanova, *Chernorizets*, pp. 62–75.

[14] S. Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture in Early Rus, c.950–1300* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 194–5.

critical assessment of the sources of the text and then of its argument, which does not start from the assumption that the text's arguments were widespread or successful in the early Middle Ages.

A Byzantino-Slavic Text? The Sources of *On Letters*

The first part of this section explores the use of Byzantine grammatical sources in *On Letters*. It argues that *On Letters* uses Byzantine sources, but that it does so in a way which is completely unlike the *VC* and somewhat unlike the *VM*. What I mean by this is that the arguments the text is trying to make are not intended to be understood within Byzantine, papal, or Frankish intellectual milieus, but that material from Byzantium's textual production is co-opted towards new, for want of a better term, Byzantino-Slavic ends. The second part addresses a question which is often taken as a given in the field: namely, whether *On Letters* shows any sign of a direct use of the *VC* or *VM* as texts, and what consequences this use or non-use has for the established narrative history of Slavonic culture.

On Letters and the Grammarians

It has long been acknowledged that the author of *On Letters* uses Greek-language sources, and that they were therefore proficient in Greek.[15] However, only two short sections of the text have been shown with any degree of certainty to be citing a Greek text.[16] These two sections, the first on the meaning of the first letters in the Greek and Hebrew alphabets, and the second on the history of the compilation of the Greek alphabet, sit apart in *On Letters*, but are found consecutive in a section of a single text in Greek. The exact origin of this Greek text remains an open question, because the grammatical information it contained has been transmitted widely under different authors, and often with no clear date of composition.

The source text which was proposed first, was the treatise *On Grammar*, a text which has recently been argued to be the authentic work of Theodore Prodromos, the twelfth-century Komnenian court poet, to whom it is attributed in thirty-three manuscripts.[17] Subsequently, Antonin Dostál pointed to the *Scholia Marciana*

[15] At least as early as 1895: Jagić, *Razsuzhdeniia*, pp. 297–319.

[16] See: Kuev, *Chernorizets*, pp. 56–71.

[17] In its original edition *On Grammar* was attributed to a Pseudo-Theodosios, considered to be a later continuator of another ancient Greek grammarian, Theodosios of Alexandria. It is this name, Pseudo-Theodosios that one can find in the studies of *On Letters*, but Zaglas has since made a strong case for the authenticity of Prodromos. Jagic, *Razsuzhdeniia*, pp. 310–9; Kuev, *Chernorizets*, pp. 57–9; N. Zagklas, 'A Byzantine Grammar Treatise Attributed to Theodorus Prodromos', *Graeco-Latina Brunensia*, 16 (2011), pp. 77–87; For the text: Theodore Prodromos (under Pseudo-Theodosius), *On Grammar*, in *Theodosii Alexandrini grammatica*, ed. K. Göttling (Leipzig, 1822), pp. 1–197. Manuscript data from Pinakes, http://pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr/ (last accessed, October 2023).

instead. The *Scholia* is a short explanatory treatise on the alphabet found in a fourteenth-century manuscript; it is one of the many un-datable *scholia* or explanatory treatises which circulated with Dionysios Thrax's *Art of Grammar*, the text which formed the backbone of Byzantine grammatical education and was mentioned briefly in Chapter 2.[18] As some of the wording of *On Letters* is closer to the *Scholia Marciana* than to *On Grammar*, this has been largely accepted, although the *Scholia Marciana* remains rejected as a source or unknown to some scholars.[19]

Of course, neither text is the direct source, as both post-date *On Letters* in one way or another. But it is clear that both *On Grammar* and the *Scholia Marciana* are citing much older material. What remains in question is whether the two texts have a common early medieval ancestor, which perhaps the author of *On Letters* also had access to, or whether they represent two textual traditions of this grammatical material that had split much earlier, in antiquity or late antiquity for example.

A closer look at grammatical material cited in *On Letters* shows that the author most probably had a common ancestor of these two sources which had a mixture of the readings which survive in the two sources. In some parts of the text, *On Letters* does follows the *Scholia Marciana* word for word, where the *Scholia* and Prodromos have variant readings. But in other phrases or sentences, it is clear that the text before our author was closer to the now discarded *On Grammar* than to the *Scholia Marciana* as it survives today. Here is just one example:

Πρῶτον μὲν τῶν παρὰ τοῖς Ἕλλησι στοιχείων ἦν ἐξ ἐτυμολογίας τοῦ ἄλεφ, Ἑβραίων πρώτου στοιχείου, ὃ ἑρμηνεύεται μάθησις, ἐντελλόμενον τῷ εἰσαγομένῳ παιδίῳ «μάθε»· ἀφ' οὗ ἄλεφ ***καὶ αὐτοὶ ὁμοίως μιμησάμενοι τὸ πρῶτον στοιχεῖον ἄλφα κεκλήκασι…***	*Ἡ τῶν παρ' Ἕλλησι στοιχείων εἰσαγωγὴ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἄλεφ γέγονεν, ἑβραϊκοῦ πρώτου στοιχείου, ὃ ἑρμηνεύεται μάθησις, ἐντελλόμενον τῷ εἰσαγομένῳ παιδὶ καὶ λέγον μάθε· ἀφ' οὗ ἄλεφ.* ***Καὶ αὐτοὶ δὴ οἱ Ἕλληνες ὁμοίως μιμησάμενοι τὸ ἄλφα κεκλήκασι…***	**‘Жидове бо а̑ писма имѫтъ алефъ, иже сѧ съказаѥтъ оучение, съврьшаѭще въводимоу дѣтишоу и глаголѭще: “оучи сѧ”, иже ѥстъ алефъ. И грьци, подобаще сѧ томоу, алъфа рѣша’**
Scholia Marciana, p. 320, 7–11	*On Grammar*, p. 1.1–5	*On Letters*, 4.1–6

[18] A. Dostál, 'Les origines de l'apologie slave par Chrabr', *Byzantinoslavica*, 24 (1963), pp. 236–46. The Scholia is found in: *Scholia Marciana (partim excerpta ex Heliodoro, Tryphone, Diomede, Stephano, Georgio Choerobosco, Gregorio Corinthio)* in *Grammatici Graeci*, ed. A. Hilgard, vol. 1.3 (Leipzig, 1901; repr. Hildesheim, 1965), pp. 292–442.

[19] Veder makes no explicit commitment on the text he cites, but a close study of the Greek in his edition suggests he is using the *Scholia Marciana*: Veder, *Utrum*, pp. 101–7. Discarded by: G. Ziffer, 'Le fonti greche del Monaco Chrabr', *Byzantinoslavica*, 56 (1995), pp. 561–70. Ignored or unknown to: Kuev, *Chernorizets*, p. 56. I. Dobrev, 'Za Otnoshenieto na Chernorizets Hrabur kum edno razsuzhdenie na gramatika Psevdo-Teodosii', *Ezik i Literatura*, 33 (1978), pp. 38–40.

The first of the letters by the Greeks was from the etymology of 'aleph', the first letter of the Hebrews, which means 'teaching', commanding to the child being introduced: "learn!", and from which 'aleph', **the same ones, likewise imitating, have called the first letter 'alpha'**…	The beginning of the letters by the Greeks was from 'aleph', the first Hebrew letter, which means 'teaching', commanding to the child being introduced, and saying: "learn!", and from which aleph, **also the same Greeks, likewise imitating have called [it] alpha**…	For the Jews have 'aleph' as [their] first letter, which means 'teaching', perfecting the child being led, and saying: "learn!", which is aleph. **And the Greeks imitating this, called [it] alpha**…

As we can see in the section highlighted in bold, both *On Letters* and *On Grammar* specify 'the Greeks' where the *Scholia Marciana* only has 'the same ones' ('αὐτοί'). Likewise, *On Letters* and *On Grammar* note the Greeks 'called [it] alpha', omitting 'the first letter' we find in the *Scholia Marciana*.

Given that the relationship between *On Grammar* and the *Scholia* remains unclear therefore, and the possibility that *On Letters* is citing a shared ancestor of both extant Greek texts, it remains imperative to study *On Letters* alongside both *On Grammar* and *Scholia*. But, to establish the kind of ancestor of *On Grammar* and the *Scholia Marciana* that the author of *On Letters* had before them, it is worth briefly turning to the use and circulation of the treatise of Dionysios Thrax and its scholia collections.

Dionysios Thrax, was a second- to first-century BC grammarian, from Alexandria (rather than Thrace), who is believed to have written a short grammatical treatise entitled *Technē Grammatikē,* or the *Art of Grammar*, which if genuine, makes it the oldest surviving such text.[20] The question of how much of what survives is genuine remains in doubt, but due to its brevity (fewer than 3,000 words) the text was often accompanied by elaborate supplements (four regular ones) and *scholia* which alone, when collated, form a 600+ page volume.[21] One such collection of scholia is the aforementioned *Scholia Marciana*. Importantly, the *Art of Grammar* and its scholia appear to have been the ubiquitous source of Greek grammatical education by late antiquity. Wouter's examination of grammatical papyri from Egypt available in 1979 makes the important conclusion that 'at least by the first century A.D. there was widespread teaching of Greek

[20] R. Robins, *The Byzantine Grammarians: Their Place in History* (Berlin, 1993), pp. 41–3.

[21] E. Dickey, *Ancient Greek Scholarship: A Guide to Finding, Reading and Understanding Scholia, Commentaries, Lexica and Grammatical Treatises, from their Beginnings to the Byzantine Period* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 77–8, 83; R. A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1988), pp. 366–7. In Bekker's 1816 edition there are 362 pages of scholia, for under 3,000 words of text. In 1901, Hilgard published a roughly 650-page volume of scholia alone. I. Bekker, *Anecdota Graeca* (1816); A. Hilgard, *Scholia in Dionysii Thracis artem grammaticam* (Leipzig, 1901).

grammar based on manuals very much on the lines of the *Art of Grammar*, sometimes apparently copying parts word by word' or making individual and small variations.[22] The use of Dionysios and his scholia continued in Byzantium. Parts of his treatise were commented on by George Choiroboskos, an eighth- to ninth-century grammarian and possibly librarian at Constantinople.[23]

The kind of text the author of *On Letters* had before them in the tenth-century Balkans, therefore, was probably a manuscript with Dionysios Thrax's *Art of Grammar* and its scholia for the purposes of Greek-language education, akin to that which George Choiroboskos had in Constantinople not much earlier. Scholarship has insinuated this in the past, but I hope to show definitive evidence that the author of *On Letters* had access to a copy of Dionysios Thrax's *Art of Grammar* proper, and not simply to its scholia.[24] I demonstrate this to be the case by using parts of *On Letters* formerly considered original, before offering an assessment of the method of citation of Greek texts in the treatise more broadly.

To begin with, Dionysios' text proper opens with a definition of 'grammar', and the six elements thereof. Number six is as follows:

> *ΠΕΡΙ ϹΤΟΙΧΕΙΟΥ*
>
> *Γράμματά ἐστιν εἰκοσιτέσσαρα ἀπὸ τοῦ α μέχρι τοῦ ω. γράμματα δὲ λέγεται διὰ τὸ γραμμαῖς καὶ ξυσμαῖς τυποῦσθαι· γράψαι γὰρ τὸ ξῦσαι παρὰ τοῖς παλαιοῖς, ὡς καὶ παρ' Ὁμήρῳ. 'Νῦν δέ μ' ἐπιγράψας ταρσὸν ποδὸς εὔχεαι αὔτως' [Λ 388]. Τὰ δὲ αὐτὰ καὶ στοιχεῖα καλεῖται διὰ τὸ ἔχειν στοῖχόν τινα καὶ τάξιν.*[25]
>
> On Letters
>
> Letters of the alphabet are twenty-four in number, from alpha to omega. They are called 'scratched letters' because they are formed by scratching and scraping; for writing was the same as scraping among the ancients as it is also with Homer: 'Now that you have scratched the sole of my foot you are boasting like this' (*Iliad* 11, 388) They are also called 'ordered elements' because they have an ordered place and position in the language.[26]

The two key terms used to describe letters by Dionysios point to the opening section of *On Letters*. Scholarly attention has focused primarily on this section's

[22] Dickey, *Ancient Greek Scholarship*, p. 44; A. Wouters, *The Grammatical Papyri from Graeco-Roman Egypt: Contributions to the study of 'Ars Grammatica' in Late Antiquity* (Brussels, 1979).

[23] N. Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium* (London, 1996), pp. 22, 70.

[24] Although neither makes an argument for this, the difference between Dionysios 'proper' and the scholia has been dealt with very loosely in both Dostal and Ziffer. For instance, see the ambiguity in: Ziffer, 'Le fonti greche', p. 567.

[25] Dionysios Thrax, *The Art of Grammar*, 9.1–7.

[26] Amended from: Robins, *The Byzantine Grammarians*, p. 53.

historicity as a narrative of the invention of Slavonic. Much more pertinently, however, this section reveals something fundamental about the author's use of sources and the argument for literacy that the text puts forward.

γράμματα δὲ λέγεται διὰ τὸ **γραμμαῖς** *καὶ* **ξυσμαῖς** *τυποῦσθαι· γράψαι γὰρ τὸ ξῦσαι παρὰ τοῖς παλαιοῖς*	Прѣжде оубо словѣне не имѣахѫ писменъ нъ чрьтами и рѣзаньми чьтѣхѫ и гатаахѫ…
Art of Grammar, 9.1–3	*On Letters*, 1.1–4.
They are called "scratched letters" because they are formed **with scratching** and **scraping**; for writing was the same as scraping among the ancients	And so, earlier, the Slavs did not have letters but with **lines** and **scratches** counted and divined…
Robins, p. 45	

I would here amend Robins' translation slightly, as the word for 'with scratching', literally 'with scratches' ('*γραμμαῖς*'), can also be translated as 'by making lines' or 'with lines', which aligns with the Slavonic 'with lines' ('чрьтами').[27] Whilst for 'scraping', or literally 'with scrapes' ('*ξυσμαῖς*'), Liddell, Scott, and Jones have simply 'scratching', and Robins' choice of word seems purely cosmetic. Both the Greek ('*ξυσμαῖς*') and Slavonic ('рѣзаньми') indicate something cut, scratched, or scraped with a sharp point. These are very peculiar terms to use, especially with reference to letters, both in Greek and Slavonic. For 'scratching' in Greek ('*ἡ ξυσμή*'), Liddell, Scott, and Jones only offer the citation from Dionysios' treatise.[28] For 'scratches' or cuts in Slavonic ('рѣза'), both of the most detailed Old Slavonic dictionaries, Miklosich's *Lexicon Palaeoslovenico-graeco-latinum* and the Czech Academy of Science's *Lexicon Linguae Palaeoslovenicae*, only have the citation from *On Letters*.[29] So, given that we know a popular scholia collection to the *Art of Grammar* contains information found in *On Letters*, this similarity in terminology makes it very likely that the author of *On Letters* had access to the *Art of Grammar* proper. The same is suggested by the line that follows:

Τὰ δὲ αὐτὰ καὶ στοιχεῖα καλεῖται διὰ τὸ ἔχειν στοῖχόν τινα καὶ τάξιν	Крьстивъше же сѧ, римьскыими и грьчьскыими писмены нѫждаахѫ сѧ пьсати словѣнскѫ рѣчь без оустроя
The Art of Grammar, 9.5–6	*On Letters,* 1.4–9.
They are also called 'ordered elements' because they have an ordered place and position in the language	And having been baptised they tried to write Slavic speech with Roman and Greek letters without order'
Robins, p. 45	

[27] *LSJ*, p. 359. See: *LPGL*, p. 1123; *LLP*, p. 890, in the latter there is also a word closer to scratch, a cut, or incursion, but the only attested source is the passage from *On Letters* above.
[28] *LSJ*, p. 1193. [29] *LPGL*, p. 811; *LLP*, p. 660.

Both texts utilise the idea of 'order' ('оустрои', '*τάξις*') when discussing alphabets or letters. When Dionysios is talking about Greek letters, letters are called 'ordered' in Greek, because they have a place and position. The point being made by *On Letters* is that this position in Greek is lost when trying to write Slavonic with Greek letters, and this naturally results in disorder ('без оустроя').

A final section of *On Letters* confirms most definitively that the author had access to Dionysios' *Art of Grammar* proper. This section is the history of the compilation of the Greek alphabet, namely the material discussed above, which was sourced from a common source of Prodromos' *On Grammar* and the *Scholia Marciana*. Despite the interest in the sources of *On Letters*, and the debate concerning whether it was Prodromos' text or the *Scholia* that the author was using, the actual words found in *On Letters* have remained surprisingly unnoticed. These show a crucial difference between the history of the Greek alphabet as it is to be found in *On Grammar* and the *Scholia*, and as we find it in *On Letters*:

Παλαμήδης δ' ὕστερον ἐλθών, ἀρξάμενος ἀπὸ τοῦ ἄλφα, δεκαὲξ μόνα τοῖς Ἕλλησιν εὗρε στοιχεῖα, α β γ δ ε ι κ λ μ ν ο π ρ ς τ υ· προσέθηκε δὲ αὐτοῖς Κάδμος ὁ Μιλήσιος γράμματα τρία, θ φ χ, διὸ καὶ πολλῷ τῷ χρόνῳ τοῖς δεκαεννέα ἐχρῶντο· […] *Μετὰ ταῦτα Σιμωνίδης ὁ Κεῖος εὑρὼν προσέθηκε δύο, η καὶ ω, Ἐπίχαρμος δὲ ὁ Συρακούσιος τρία, ζ ξ ψ, καὶ οὕτως ἐπληρώθησαν τὰ εἰκοσιτέσσαρα.*

Scholia Marciana, 320, 20–6

Πρῶτος τοίνυν ἦν ὁ Παλαμήδης ὁ ἀρξάμενος εὑρίσκειν ὕστερον τὰ ἑλληνικὰ γράμματα· εὗρε δὲ ἑκκαίδεκα μόνον στοιχεῖα τουτέστιν Α. Β. Γ. Δ. Ε. Ι. Κ. Λ. Μ. Ν. Ο. Π. Ρ. Σ. Τ. Υ. Κάδμος δὲ ὁ Μιλήσιος μετὰ ταῦτα προσέθηκεν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἄλλα τρία γράμματα, τὸ Θ καὶ τὸ Φ καὶ τὸ Χ· διὸ πολλῷ τῷ χρόνῳ τοῖς ἐννεακαίδεκα στοιχείοις ἐχρῶντο ·[…] *ἔπειτα Σιμωνίδης ὁ Κεῖος εὑρὼν τὸ Η καὶ Ω μέγα προσέθηκε τοῖς ἄλλοις· μετέπειτα τὸ Ζ, τὸ Ξ, τὸ Ψ, καὶ οὕτως ἐπληρώθησαν τὰ εἰκοσιτέσσαρα γράμματα τῶν Ἑλλήνων, ἃ καὶ στοιχεῖα λέγονται·*

On Grammar, 1.18–2.9

Паламидъ же послѣжде пришьдъ, научънъ отъ алъфы и виты, ѕ҃і писменъ тъкъмо елъликомъ обрѣте. Приложи же имъ Кадъмъ Милисии писмена г҃. Тѣмьже мънога лѣта д҃і писмены писаахѫ. По томь Симонидъ, обрѣтъ приложи е҃ писмени, Епихарии же съказатель г҃ писмена обрѣте, и събьра са ихъ к҃д. По мъногѣхъ же лѣтѣхъ дионисии грамъматикъ ѕ҃ дъвогласьныхъ обрѣте, по томь же дроугъ и ѥ҃ и дроугъ и г҃ чисменитая. И тако мъногы мъногыими лѣты ѥдъва събьраша ѯ҃и писменъ.

On Letters, 10.1–18.

And **Palamedes**, having come later, began from alpha and found only 16 letters for the Greeks, [α β γ δ ϵ ι κ λ μ ν ο π ρ ς τ υ], **Kadmos of Miletus** added 3 letters to these, [θ φ χ,] and after a long time they found 19. […] After these things, **Simonides of Keios**, having found them added two letters, η and ω, **Epicharmos of Syracuse** [added] three, [ζ ξ ψ], and in this way 24 [letters] were added up.

And first it was, therefore, **Palamedes** who later began to find the Greek letters. But he only found 16 letters, here they are: [*A. B. Γ. Δ. E. I. K. Λ. M. N. O. Π. P. Σ. T. Y*]. After this, **Kadmos of Miletus** added to them also another three letters: the *Θ* and the *Φ* and the *X*. After a long time, they found the 19 letters. […] Then, **Simonides of Keios** found the H and *Ω* and added [them] to the others, and since then the Z and *Ξ*, and *Ψ*, and in this way the 24 letters of the Greeks were added up, which are also called *stoicheia*.

For **Palamedes** came after, [and] having begun from Alpha and Beta, he only found 16 letters for the Hellenes. **Kadmos of Miletus** added 3 to them. And it was so for many years, they were writing with 19 letters. After **Simonides** found and added 2 letters, **Epicharmus the 'Commentator'** 3 letters, and 24 of them where brought together. And after many years, **Dionysios the grammarian** found 6 diphthongs, and then another 5 and another also 3 numerals. And in this way, many people over many years barely gathered 38 letters.

In this instance, the text *On Letters* is closer to the *Scholia* which mentions Epicharmus of Syracuse after Simonides.[30] When the Slavonic author got to Epicharmus, they had made up the full twenty-four letters of the Greek alphabet. However, they were in desperate need of more in order to (falsely) claim that the Greek and Slavonic alphabets have the same number of letters, namely thirty-eight. Rather deceitfully, the author has inserted a 'Dionysios the Grammarian', who cannot be anyone but Dionysios Thrax, together with a number of diphthongs (which are not technically letters) to boost the numbers up to the required thirty-eight. The first number of diphthongs listed in *On Letters*, six, aligns with the number of diphthongs listed by Thrax in the *Art of Grammar* proper: 'There are six diphthongs: αι αυ ϵι ϵυ οι ου'.[31] Yet, Dionysios neither claims to invent or discover these diphthongs, nor that diphthongs are in fact letters. The additional five diphthongs are not to be found in Dionysios' treatise at all, and three numerals, although they do appear, are also not considered to be letters. That *On Letters* was not intended as an accurate Greek grammar is clear, but so too is the fact that the author was certainly using one.

This creative citation is worth exploring, as the deployment of Byzantine material in *On Letters* reveals some key differences with the *VC* and *VM*. First and

[30] Dostal, 'Les origins', p. 242.
[31] '*Δίφθογγοι δέ ϵἰσιν ἕξ· αι αυ ϵι ϵυ οι ου*', Dionysios Thrax, *The Art of Grammar*, 10.8.

foremost, this use of Greek-language material, namely intentionally obscuring the Byzantine content to achieve its own aims, is fundamentally different to the use of Byzantine texts in the *VC*. As I argued in Chapters 2 and 3, Byzantine intellectual culture is both the source of the *VC*'s arguments and the intended audience for its outputs: 'we' in the text are the Byzantines, not the Slavs. The likelihood of the *VC* misrepresenting how many letters there are in the Greek alphabet in order to strengthen the sanctity of Slavonic, as *On Letters* does, is very slim indeed.

In the *VM*, on the other hand, one Byzantine source is used in a similarly creative way, namely the opening synopsis of Ecumenical councils. As discussed in Chapter 4, it is evident that a council synopsis of the Byzantine type was accessible to the *VM*'s author, but that they undertook a number of intentional obfuscations to represent all Ecumenical councils as papally-guided affairs, even if the pope did not attend them. Thus, *VM* and *On Letters* share a politicised repurposing of Byzantine material. But one key difference remains. The *VM*'s portrayal of political and religious authority looked towards a papal patron; it was seeking legitimacy from without not from a community of Slavonic speakers. The *VM* shares this with the *VC*. Both texts have within them a 'Slavonic people' who receive the liturgy, but in both texts this community is a means to an end, whether that be to an argument about Byzantine missionary activity or to a claim to papal patronage. *On Letters*, on the other hand, is, in my view, the first Slavonic text about the alphabet which is actually *for* Slavonic speakers. Yet it is still a Byzantino-Slavic text, inasmuch as it seeks to articulate the defence of the alphabet to Slavonic speakers entirely through Greek-language ideas about grammar.

On Letters, the Life of Cyril, and the Life of Methodios

Dwelling on the differences between the use of Byzantine material in *On Letters*, the *VC*, and *VM*, does raise the question: did *On Letters* have access to the *VC* and *VM* as we know them today? The answer in scholarship has often been an assumed yes. In large part, this is due to the conviction that *On Letters* is in some sense a continuation of the shared mission of Cyril and Methodios, defending the flame of Slavonic literacy. To give but one example, Italian philologist Riccardo Picchio asserts that the apostolicism of *VC* is reaffirmed in the *VM*, and that the same apostolicism acts 'as a dialectical premise in the treatise *On Letters* by the monk Khrabur'.[32] This kind of statement can best be described as an instance of

[32] 'come premessa dialettica nel trattato Delle Lettere del monaco Hrabr', R. Picchio, 'Questione della lingua e Slavia cirillomethodiana', in his ed., *Studi sulla questione della lingua presso gli Slavi'* (Rome, 1972), pp. 86–108, at p. 34. The same sentiment is expressed by Kuev: 'The defence of Slavonic writing in this case is not a new and unknown occurrence in history. The same idea is served earlier by the brothers Cyril and Methodios. So in this respect, Khrabur is their equal and follower.' ('Защитата на славянската писменост в случая не е ново и непознато явление в историята. На същата идея преди това служат братята Кирил и Методий. Така, че в това отношение Храбър е техен равностен последовател.'), Kuev, *Chernorizets*, p. 151.

'inductive' rather than 'deductive' contextualisation, where a pre-assumed context of a conscious continuity and preservation of Slavonic structures scholars' engagement with the texts before them.[33] As shown earlier, there is hardly a shared idea of apostolicism between the *VC* and *VM*. This chapter will seek to show, furthermore, that *On Letters* is not concerned with apostolicism or missionary activity at all, and that close textual similarities between the *VC*, *VM, and On Letters* are thin on the ground.[34]

Of course, the author of *On Letters* knows who created the alphabet and therefore must have access to some source relating to Cyril and Methodios:

> Константѣтинъ философъ, нарицаемыи Кирилъ. Тъ ны писмена сътвори и кънигы прѣложи, и Меѳодии братъ его[35]
>
> Constantine the philosopher, called Cyril. He created the letters for us and translated the books, and Methodios, his brother.

It is notable that Methodios features in this summary. As I argued in Chapter 4, scholarship has often failed to account for the absence of Methodios from the Moravian mission and alphabet invention in the *VC*. Methodios is also absent in a homily to Cyril alone, which is often attributed to Clement of Ohrid, the early tenth-century Cyrillo-Methodian disciple, and which closely follows the story of the *VC*.[36] Meanwhile Methodios is present not only in the *VM*, but also in the homily to Cyril and Methodios as a pair, which largely follows the story as it is found in the *VM*.[37] This homily has also been attributed to Clement of Ohrid. Although there are issues with the process of attribution of both, their language indicates both were most probably written sometime in the early tenth century. So, both the Cyril only and the Cyril and Methodios narratives continued to circulate in different genres and texts; there was no settled consensus. As explored in Chapter 6, there are obvious reasons why the *VM* stresses the role of Methodios, given the wavering patronage of the bishopric of Moravia in the late ninth century. It is less clear whether accepting the role of Methodios and thus the *VM* narrative

[33] T. Shogimen, 'On the Elusiveness of Context', *History and Theory*, 55 (2016), pp. 233–52.

[34] It is perhaps telling that Kuev's chapter devoted to the sources of *On Letters* does not even mention potential Slavonic language material. Kuev, *Chernorizets*, pp. 56–71.

[35] *On Letters*, 14.11–15.

[36] *Panegyric to Constantine-Cyril*, in Kliment, *Subrani*, vol. 1, pp. 415–443, esp. pp. 426–8 and translated in: Kliment Okhridski, 'Pokhvalno slovo za Kiril i Metodii', in Gasheva, *Stara Bulgarska literatura*, vol. 2, pp. 84–92.

[37] *Panegyric to Cyril and Methodios*, in: Kliment Okhridski, *Subrani*, vol. 1, pp. 443–511, esp. pp. 468–75 and translated in: Kliment Okhridski, 'Pokhvalno slovo za Kiril filosof', trans. in L. Gasheva, *Stara Bulgarska literatura*, vol. 2 (Sofia, 1982), pp. 81–3.

of the invention of Slavonic held any particular ideological weight in the context of the Balkans, and *On Letters* more specifically.

In any case, *On Letters* is much more concerned with Cyril than Methodios. The latter is only mentioned this once, whereas the former's invention of the alphabet is reiterated at least an additional five times in the short space of a few pages.[38] The mention of Methodios in the passage is also rather vague. Both the verbs, 'created' and 'translated', are in the singular and therefore must refer to Cyril. So, it is unclear what if anything 'and Methodios his brother' ('и Меѳодии братъ его') actually did. This marks a shift away from the preoccupations of the Moravian bishopric in the *VM*, back towards Cyril as an individual actor. I will return to this later in this chapter.

Aside from this knowledge of the creators of the alphabet, there are no clear direct textual borrowings between the *VC* and *VM*, and *On Letters*. A good test case for this is the only topic of discussion that the three texts share. All three offer a refutation of trilingualism, or opposition to the use of Slavonic in religious contexts because it is not one of the three holy languages, Greek, Latin, or Hebrew. But their different ways of framing this issue serve as a good indicator of the kinds of things each text is interested in.

As noted in Chapter 4, in the *VC* the proponents of trilingualism are Venetian priests and monks, who are embarrassed by Cyril's rhetorical abilities and florilegium of biblical quotations. In the *VM*, the trilingualists are in Rome, and the pope reprimands them and forces some of them to consecrate Slavonic-preaching priests, thus heavily institutionalising the legitimacy of Slavonic. Across these two texts and the papal letters by John VIII, there emerges what I discuss in Chapter 6 as a shared body of biblical quotations or tropes to defend Slavonic in this context, that the three (*VC*, *VM*, and John VIII's letters) share: in particular Psalm 116 (used in all three texts) and Acts 2 (used in the *VM* and a letter of John).[39] These scriptural quotations are all concerned with the missionary nature of Christianity and promote the preaching of the word of God to all peoples in all languages.

It is perhaps striking, as already observed in passing by Kuev, that the author of *On Letters* offers a completely different kind of argumentation in defence of Slavonic.[40] Whilst the *VC* and *VM* advance different agendas with the material, their rendering of the objection to Slavonic is relatively consistent:

[38] Cyril as lone creator: *On Letters*, 2.6–12; 5.1–2; 7.13; 12.1–4. Only single mention of Methodios with him: 14.11–15.

[39] See Chapter 2.

[40] 'такава аргументация на своята теза, каквато няма у двамата братя', Kuev, *Chernorizets*, p. 152.

“Ne славит се богь о семь. Аще бѡ би емоу сице годѣ было, тѡ не бы ли могль сътворити да быше и сіи испрьва, писмени пишоуще бесѣды свое, славили бога? Nъ три ѥзыки тъкмо ѥс избраль: евреискыи, и грьчьскыи и латин’скыи” […] и побѣждь ѥ, нарече ихь триѥзычникы и пилатьны, яко Пилатȣ тако написавшоу на тітлѣ господни

VC, 15.5–9.

‘“God is not praised in this way [i.e. in Slavonic]. For if this would have been to his liking, could he have not created it to be so that from the beginning they wrote letters and praised the lord with their words? But he chose only three languages: Hebrew, Greek and Latin’. […] And he (Cyril) defeated them, and called them trilingualists and Pilatists, since Pilates had written this on the cross of the Lord.

Бѧахоу же етера многа чадь, яже гоужахоу словѣньскыя книгы, глагоюще, яко не достоить никоторомоу же языкоу имѣти боуковъ своихъ, развѣ евреи и грькъ и латинъ, по Пулатовоу писанию ѥже на крьстѣ господьни написа. Ѥже апостоликъ пилатъны и трьязичьнкы нареклъ проклѧть

VM, 6.3–4.

And there were many other people, who were denigrating the Slavonic books, saying that no people are worthy of having its own books, except the Jews, Greeks and Latins, in accordance with Pilate’s inscription which he wrote upon the cross of the Lord. And the pope having called them Pilatists and trilingualists, condemned them.

By contrast, in *On Letters* the charge appears as follows.

Дроузии же глаголѭтъ: ‘Чьсомоу сѫтъ словѣньскы кънигы? Ни тѣхъ бо ѥстъ Богъ сътворилъ, ни ти анъгели, ни сѫтъ иждеконьны, яко жидовьскы и римьскы и елълиньскы, яже отъ кона сѫтъ, и прияты сѫтъ богомъ’ А дроузии мьнѧтъ, яко богъ а҃ имъ ѥсть сътворилъ писмена. И не вѣдатъ сѧ чьто глаголѭще, окаянии, яко г҃ ми языкы ѥстъ богъ повелѣлъ кънигамъ быти, якоже въ еѵанъгелии пишетъ: И бѣ дъска напьсана жидовьскы и римьскы и елълиньскы, а ‘словѣньскы’ нѣстъ тоу. Тѣмьже не сѫтъ словѣньскы кънигы отъ Бога’[41]

And others say: ‘What are the Slavonic books for? Neither God nor angels created them, nor do they exist from the beginning, as the Hebrew, and Roman and Greek, which are from the beginning and are accepted by God.’ And others think that God made the letters for them first. And they do not see what they are saying, the wretches, ‘God has willed that there be books in three languages, as it

[41] *On Letters*, 8.1–17.

says in the Gospel: And it was written on the board in Hebrew, Latin and Greek, but Slavonic was not there. Therefore, the Slavonic books are not from God."

The case of the trilingualists in *On Letters* shares only one argument with the *VC* and *VM*, and that is the Gospel of Luke's account of the three languages written on the cross of Christ. This certainly leaves open the possibility that the author had access to a text akin to the *VC* or *VM*. Even if the author had such a text, however, they were clearly not interested in its ideas. Aside from the account of Luke, the trilingualist objections to Slavonic in *On Letters* are a significant departure from the *VC* and *VM*. The first is a preoccupation with *who* created the letters, or rather the fact that 'neither God nor angels' created the Slavonic alphabet. The second is the claim, by some opponents to Slavonic (rendered simply as 'others'), that God 'made the letters for them first'.

These different objections result in a very different defence by our author. There is no use to the corpus of Psalms and Acts quotations which defend all peoples' right to praise the Lord (Psalm 116) or declare the wonders of God (Acts 2:11) in all languages. *On Letters* uses only one supposedly biblical quotation before deploying some examples: 'All things come to be by God, in order, and not at once.'[42] In place of apostolicism, we find an interest in the genealogy of creation and the history of language. The text seeks to establish God as the creator of all things, including alphabets, and thus to show that those (presumably of the Greeks or Hebrews or Latins) who believe that their alphabet was first, are barking up the wrong tree. Neither Hebrew, nor Greek, nor Latin was the oldest language, because, according to our author, Adam spoke Syriac. (This is a very unusual and problematic claim in Greek literature, only advocated by Theodoret of Cyrrhus in the whole Greek corpus.[43])

The author continues their history of language difference through a reading of the Babel myth.[44] Everyone spoke Syriac until Babel, when, as will be discussed in more depth below, languages and customs were distributed to the ancient peoples: the Egyptians, Persians, Assyrians, Jews, and Greeks.[45] The absence of the Latins here, and more generally in the treatise, makes clear that the Moravian mission and its concerns were no longer matters of interest to the author of *On Letters* and their community.

There are already clear signs, therefore, both in the nature of the use of Byzantine sources in *On Letters*, and in the way that the text deals with the so-called trilingualist objection to Slavonic, that this is a very different text to the *VC*

[42] 'Вьсѧ по рѧдоу бываѭтъ отъ бога а не иногдоѭ', ibid., 8.21–2.

[43] See: Y. Minets, *The Slow Fall of Babel: Languages and Identities in Late Antique Christianity* (Cambridge, 2021), p. 144.

[44] *On Letters*, 9.1–5. [45] Ibid., 9.11–23.

and more different still to the *VM*. But the question of the availability of either remains open. I wish to propose two possibilities.

The first is that we take as a given the statement in *On Letters* that all Slavonic scribes or bookmen know who created the alphabet, and also accept that this knowledge came specifically from one or both *vitae*; given the reference to Methodios, perhaps the *VM*.[46] This is certainly possible, as there is evidence that the *vitae* were transmitted south before they went to Rus.[47] John the Exarch, for instance, working under the patronage of Symeon and therefore in the early tenth century, explicitly claims that he is following Cyril and Methodios in their translation efforts, in the preface to his translation of John of Damascus' *On the Orthodox Faith*, named *Heavens* in Slavonic (and referred to as such in the rest of this book).[48] If we accept that *On Letters* had access to the *VM* and/or *VC*, however, we must also accept the author essentially choosing not to use these texts and the way they frame the invention of the alphabet.

The second, and more sceptical possibility is that the *VC* and *VM* were not all that well known in the Balkans, and that *On Letters* has a vaguer source, whether a hymn or short homily, or an oral tradition that the alphabet was created by two men, Constantine-Cyril the Philosopher, and Methodios his brother. This source must come from the tradition of the Methodian rewriting of the invention of the alphabet, but it is possible that it is very far removed from the *VM* itself. This is suggested by a closer look at the aforementioned preface by the court writer John the Exarch, *Heavens*, which claims to continue the translation efforts of Cyril and Methodios.[49]

John the Exarch ascribes translated 'readings from the Gospel and Apostles' to Cyril (perhaps a gospel lectionary), and translations of 'all sixty canonical books' to Methodios.[50] These details, however, do not align exactly with the *VC* or the *VM*. The *VC* notes that Cyril started by writing the famous John 1:1 quote, but then vaguely notes that he translated 'the whole church ritual order', and 'taught them [the Moravian students] the matins, the hours, the vespers, the post-vespers and the liturgy'.[51] The *VM* on the other hand notes that Methodios translated 'all books in full except Maccabees', because 'earlier, with the philosopher, he had only translated the Psalter, the Gospel with the Apostles and selected church services'.[52]

[46] 'то вьси вѣдатъ', ibid., 14.9–15.

[47] C. Diddi, 'Towards a Critical Edition of the Vita Constantini: The South Slavonic Tradition, the Russian Copies of the Menologium for February and the Russian Miscellanies', in A. Kulik et al., eds., *The Bible in Slavic Tradition* (Leiden, 2016), p. 458.

[48] John the Exarch, *Heavens*, in *Ekthesis akribēs tēs orthodoxou pisteōs des Hl. Johannes von Damaskus: In der Übersetzung des Exarchen Johannes*, eds. L. Sadnik and R. Aitzetmüller, vol. 1. (Freiburg im Preisgau, 1967–83), pp. 2–4.

[49] Ibid., p.2.

[50] 'отъ вангєлия и апостола […] изборъ', 'вса оуставьныа кънигы', ibid., p.4.

[51] 'вѣсь цьрковьныи чинь', 'наоучи ѥ Ѹтрьници, и часовѣмь, и вечерни, и павечерници, и таинѣи слоуж'вѣ', *VC*, 15.2–3.

[52] 'вьса книгы, вьса испъл'нь, развѣ Макавѣи', 'пьсалтырь во вѣ тъкъмо и евангелиѥ съ апосьтоломь и избьраными слоужьбами цьрквьныими с философъмь прѣложилъ пьрьвѣѥ', *VM*, 15.1, 4.

John Exarch's source is clearly closer to the *VM* than the *VC*. Just as in *On Letters*, therefore, John the Exarch is receiving a Methodian-ised tradition of the alphabet invention. But there are still some differences between the *VM* and the preface to *Heavens* which point to an intermediate source or a flexible oral tradition. John Exarch omits the 'except Maccabees' clarification, and renders 'all books in full', meaning holy books, as 'canonical books'. This could simply be a cosmetic change, but it could also indicate a reinterpretation of the intended 'scripture' into a more practical set of liturgical texts: from a gospel to a gospel lectionary for instance. John the Exarch also separates the works of Cyril and of Methodios, which are presented as collaborative in the *VM*, and slightly diminishes them. The *VM* notes the two brothers translated from the Gospel, Apostles, and Psalter, whereas John the Exarch omits the Psalter, and notes Cyril translated service 'readings from the Gospel and the Apostles'. In short, the author of *Heavens* has access to *something* like the *VM*, but not necessarily the *VM* itself as it survives today.

My own inclination is with the latter, more sceptical possibility, that the Cyrillo-Methodian source of *On Letters* is not the *VC* or *VM* in particular, but a more diffusely transmitted story, whether in oral form or in the form of homily or hymn, which nonetheless emerges from the *VM*'s rewriting of the invention of Slavonic. Evidence is admittedly scarce, but either of these albeit tentative options, point to a very different picture to that of the oft-assumed continuity of purpose between the *VC*, *VM*, *and On Letters* found in scholarship.

In short, a transformation of Cyril and of the invention of the alphabet is evident in *On Letters*, along different intellectual lines to those found in the *VC* and *VM*. This has only been touched on so far. And whilst the uncertainties concerning the Cyrillo-Methodian source leave some questions open, the chronologies of the *VM* and *On Letters* permit us to locate these changes to a place and time, even if not explicitly to a person or court. As discussed in Chapter 4, the *VM* must have been composed sometime after ca. 886 and sometime before ca. 907, whilst as mentioned above the *terminus ante quem* of *On Letters* is ca. 927, so only twenty to forty years later.

In the grand scheme of uncertainty surrounding early medieval Central and Eastern European history, these are rather tight timelines. They point to three profoundly different representations of the invention of Slavonic and its creator emerging in the roughly sixty years after its invention: once as narrated in the *VC*, once in the reframing of the *VM* and once again in the early medieval Balkans, as attested to by the concerns of *On Letters*. That is a new myth every two decades. Whilst Cyril may have invented the letters, therefore, medieval authors continued inventing what they meant and what they were for, to different ends in different contexts throughout the ninth and tenth centuries. In what follows, this chapter will seek to unpack the new Slavonic invention found in *On Letters*.

Letters in *On Letters*

In this section, I offer an analysis of the argument of *On Letters*. This has two parts. The first assesses the narrative of the invention of Slavonic and its inventor. The second analyses what is presented as the antithesis to Slavonic, the invention of Greek and its inventors, and the consequences this has for Cyril and his categorisation. But these definitions are not neat, and they produce a number of problems for our author. In the next section then, I turn to tensions revealed by these two binaries. Throughout, as already suggested, I argue that *On Letters* departs radically from the sentiments of the *VC* and from the preoccupations of the *VM*, and that this shift is one away from the Latinised core of the *VM*, and towards a Greek-language core of sources. But this is not simply a return to the world of the *VC*, because for the first time in texts concerning the alphabet, Greek-language materials are used to introduce hostility between Greek and Slavonic.

Inventing Slavonic

As noted above, *On Letters* opens with what I have argued to be a transformation of a section of Dionysios Thrax's treatise, the *Art of Grammar*. This section plays a key role in *On Letters*, as it forms the basic timeline and framework for their invention of Slavonic. The text proposes three stages to literacy acquisition by the Slavs through a rather subversive use of Dionysios' text:

> *γράμματα δὲ λέγεται διὰ τὸ γραμμαῖς καὶ ξυσμαῖς τυποῦσθαι· γράψαι γὰρ τὸ ξῦσαι παρὰ τοῖς παλαιοῖς. Τὰ δὲ αὐτὰ καὶ στοιχεῖα καλεῖται διὰ τὸ ἔχειν στοῖχόν τινα καὶ τάξιν*
>
> *Art of Grammar*, 9.1–6

> Прѣжде оубо словѣне не имѣахѫ писменъ нъ чрьтами и рѣзаньми чьтѣхѫ и гатаахѫ погани сѫще. Крьстивъше же сѧ, римьскыими и грьчьскыими писмены нѫждаахѫ сѧ пьсати словѣнскѫ рѣчь без оустроя
>
> *On Letters*, 1.1–8.

> They are called 'scratched letters' because they are formed with lines and scratches; for writing was the same as scratching among the ancients. They are also called 'ordered elements' because they have an ordered place and position in the language

> And so, earlier, the Slavs did not have letters but, with lines and scratches, counted and divined, being pagan. And having been baptised they tried to write Slavic speech with Roman and Greek letters without order

The first phase is paganism and illiteracy. The idea that 'earlier' the Slavs used 'lines and scratches' is in line with Dionysios' idea that 'for the ancients' writing

was done 'with lines and scratches'. However, *On Letters* does not accept the very basic premise of the *Art of Grammar* that scratches *are* letters, arguing instead, that scratching was the product of illiteracy: it is what the Slavs did when they 'did not have letters'. Moreover, illiteracy, or scratching appears to be in some sense associated with paganism.

The second phase is marked by conversion and literacy but with foreign letters. To our author this was unsuitable, it was done 'without order'. This too is a subversion of the *Art of Grammar*'s definition of (Greek) letters, which makes clear they are ordered, and have a 'rightful place and position'.

The third and final stage is Christian Slavonic literacy:

> […] чьловѣколюбьць Богъ, строѩи вься […] помиловавъ родъ словѣнскъ, посла имъ Конъстантътина философа нарицаѥмаѥго Кирила[53]
>
> man-loving God, who orders everything […] having felt compassion for the Slavic race, sent Constantine the philosopher called Cyril to them.

On Letters cleverly distinguishes, therefore, between the attempts to record Slavonic in Greek and Latin 'without order' ('без оустроя') and the successful attempts to do so in Slavonic, which are brought about by God 'who orders everything' ('строѩи вься').

In addition to subverting the scheme present in the *Art of Grammar*, the text's account of the alphabet invention abstracts it from the concrete political context in which it occurs in the *VC* and *VM*. It notes that God felt compassion for the Slavic race but not when, where, or why this happened. This is in stark contrast to the account in our hagiographies, where the letters are given to Cyril after prayer in a historically situated moment of missionary activity by Emperor Michael III to Rastislav of Moravia.[54]

This abstraction also results in the sanctification of Cyril, in much stronger terms than we find in the *VC* and *VM*. Both hagiographies are keen to retain the transferal of agency in Orthodox theology. Saints act on behalf of or via God, not of their own accord, so worshipping them is not worshipping an idol, but simply worshipping God via his intercessor. So our lives are careful to note that Cyril does not create the letters, 'God revealed [the letters] to him' or 'God revealed the Slavonic books to the philosopher'.[55]

On Letters, by contrast, is less careful: Cyril 'created the letters and translated the books'.[56] The operative Slavonic verb, 'to make' or 'create' ('сътворити') shifts the agentic weight of creation entirely to Cyril.[57] And it is not accidental, *On*

[53] *On Letters*, 2.1–6. [54] *VC*, 14.13; *VM*, 5.11.
[55] 'ѥ емоу богъ яви', *VC*, 14.13; 'яви богъ фолософоу словѣнскы книгы', *VM*, 5.11.
[56] 'писмена сътвори и кънигы прѣложи', *On Letters*, 14.13–14.
[57] *LPGL*, p. 958; *LLP*, pp. 345–51.

Letters uses this and only this verb to refer to Cyril's invention on seven separate occasions.[58] The only other agent in the text who is permitted this verb is God.

Thus, the text generalises the invention of Slavonic by unchaining it from the specific time and place recorded in the *VC* or *VM*. But it also elevates Cyril's agency, thus parting ways with hagiographic convention. Cyril in *On Letters* is permitted action that the author of the *VC* considered too sacred for a saint.

Inventing Greek

As noted at the start of this chapter, the rhetorical opponent to the Slavonic alphabet in the text is the Greek alphabet. If Slavonic and its sanctity are the thesis of the treatise, the Greek and its lack thereof are very much the antithesis. As Slavonic is sanctified, therefore, *On Letters* seeks to paganise Greek.

Slavonic letters are made or created ('сътворити') by Cyril, who is sent by God himself. Greek, by contrast, is not made or created. Instead, the author uses verbs like 'to discover' ('обрѣсти', rendering the Greek '*εὑρίσκω*') or 'to add' ('приложити', rendering the Greek '*προστίθημι*').[59] While Cyril was one creator, 'they [were] many [men] over many years, seven of them ordered the letters'.[60] Some of these are taken from the grammatical source material, but others like 'to order' are original.[61] This kind of intellectual gymnastics is clearest in the most complete summary of the author's argument in the treatise:

> Словѣньска писмена сватѣиша сѫтъ и ѹьстьнѣиша, сватъ бо мѫжь сътворилъ ѣа ѥстъ, а грьчьска елълини погании[62]
>
> The Slavonic letters are holier and more venerable, for a holy man has created them, while the Greek [letters]—pagan Hellenes

Euphemistic verbs have here been replaced by the total absence of a verb. It is understood, of course, that the supplement is 'created', but it is not stated. *On Letters* solidifies a distinction between creation and discovery or ordering. And as with scratching and writing, this distinction is not just temporal but religious too: divine creation is distinguished from pagan gathering.

The paganisation of the Greek alphabet's emergence has consequences for Greek speakers too, as their own holiness is called into question. Throughout the text, 'Greeks' and 'Hellenes' are used interchangeably, even though the author

[58] *On Letters*, 2, 4, 5, 7 (twice), 12, 15.
[59] Ibid., 7.9, 10.6–18; *LPGL*, p. 476; *LLP*, p. 491.
[60] 'писмена сътвори и кънигы прѣложи', 'а они мънози мъногы лѣты—ѯ ихъ писмена оустрои', *On Letters*, 14.13–14; 12.6–8.
[61] See: *Scholia Marciana*, 320.20–26; *On Grammar*, 1.18–2.9.
[62] *On Letters*, 12.9–11.

seems to prefer the former, which together with its adjectival form is used fourteen times, whilst the latter and its adjective is used six times.[63] It seems at one instance, when the two are put together that the alphabet is described as 'Greek', but the people as 'Hellenes', but this is contradicted elsewhere in the text when 'Greek' clearly means people too.[64] As far as *On Letters* is concerned, therefore, Greeks and Hellenes seem to be one and the same.

This makes good sense in the context of *On Letters*' generic theory of languages and peoples, which emerges from a reading of the fall of Babel story in Genesis 11:6–8. As noted earlier, the text argues that everyone spoke Syriac 'until God scattered the languages/people at the building of the tower, as it is written':[65]

> и якоже са ѣзыци размѣсиша, тако и нрави и обычаи и оустави и закони и хытрости на ѣзыкы[66]
>
> and just as the languages/people [lit. tongues] were mixed up, so too were the dispositions and customs, and rules, and laws and arts into the languages/people

It is unclear whether the author uses 'tongue' ('ѣзыкъ') to mean language, people, or ethnos, but they clearly take the scattering of Babel to have resulted in the making of different peoples with different dispositions.[67] Thus, what we would perhaps consider as 'ethnic' difference, is here perceived as interchangeable with and the product of linguistic practice. The text lists a series of peoples/language speakers, and their respective key customs or dispositions. The Egyptians were given geometry, the Persians, Chaldeans, and Assyrians are given astronomy, witchcraft, soothsaying, spells, and all the human arts.[68] These are rather standard Greek *topoi*. Kuev's source-study finds plenty of lists like these in early Christian literature such as the *Clementine Recognitions* assigned to Clement of Rome from the first century, Tatian's *Against the Greeks* from the second century, and Theodoret of Cyrrhus' fifth-century *A Cure for Pagan Maladies* (although literally the word translated as 'Pagan' is 'Hellenic', '*ἡ Ἑλληνικών Παθημάτων Θεραπευτική*').[69] They persist in the early medieval period too, as one can be found in the ninth-century *Chronicle* of George the Monk, Hamartolos.[70]

[63] Greeks: Ibid. 1.11; 2.10; 2.12; 3.5; 4.6; 4.7; 4.9; 6.4; 7.4; 7.5; 11.5; 12.11; 13.5; 14.1. Hellenes: 8.5; 8.15; 9.3; 9.23; 10.1; 12.11.

[64] 'but the Greek [alphabet]—Pagan Hellenes' ('а грьчьска елълини погании'), ibid., 12.11; but then: 'And the Greeks, imitating this, say "alpha" ('И грьци, подобаще са томоу, алъфа рѣша'), ibid., 4.6.

[65] 'и доньдеже Богъ раздѣли ѣзыкы при стълпотворении, якоже пишетъ', ibid., 9.7–8.

[66] Ibid., 9.10–12. [67] See: *LLP*, pp. 1020–2. [68] Ibid., 9.13–23.

[69] Kuev, *Chernorizets*, pp. 59–60; *Clementine Recognitions*, in *Die Pseudoklementinen II. Rekognitionen*, eds. F. Paschke and B. Rehm (Berlin, 1965). Tatian, *Against the Greeks*, in Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos and Fragments*, ed., trans. M. Whittaker (Oxford, 1982). Theodoret of Cyrus, *A Cure for Pagan Maladies*, in *Théodoret de Cyr. Thérapeutique des maladies helléniques*, ed. P. Canivet, 2 vols. (Paris, 1958). Theodoret of Cyrus, *A Cure for Pagan Maladies*, trans. T. Halton (New York, 2013).

[70] George Hamartolos, *Chronicle*, in *Georgii monachi chronicon*, ed. C. de Boor, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1904).

The author of *On Letters* assigns broadly the same skills to the same peoples, as we find in Tatian, Theodoret, and the like. The only divergence with this corpus is that our text includes the Jews amongst the early peoples borne from Babel, whereas they are absent from Tatian, Theodoret, and the other texts identified by Kuev. What *On Letters* considers to be the 'dispositions, and customs and rules' given to the Jews are as follows:

> сватꙑѩ кънигꙑ въ нихъже ѥстъ пьсано яко Богъ сътвори небо и ꙁемлѭ и вься яже на нѥю и чьловѣка и вься по рѩдоу, а єлъдиномъ—грамъматикия, риторикия, и философия[71]
>
> the holy books in which it is written that God created heaven and earth and all things which are on it, and man and everything according to order, while to the Hellenes—[were given] grammar, rhetoric and philosophy

This contrast between Greeks and Jews is clearly intentional, marked by the 'a' connective, here translated as 'while', which usually indicates a weak opposition; more than 'and', less than 'but'. The rest of the passage, listing Egyptians, Persians, and the other peoples, uses the simple 'and' connective; only here at the very end of the list do we find grammatical opposition. *On Letters* is keen to stress therefore, that the Hellenes, who are the same as the Greeks within the text, were not the chosen people of God; they were given Hellenic arts alone. And once again, our author insists that this was done 'according to order'.

This is precisely the kind of categorical separation of sacred scripture and Hellenic learning that the *VC* seeks to reconcile by casting Cyril as a Christian philosopher. The *VM* on the other hand, whilst it diminishes Cyril and his rhetoric at the hands of the pope and church, seems more uninterested in than hostile to Hellenic education. The expression of clear hostility here marks a major change in discourse about the Slavonic alphabet, as well as a return to sourcing its defence exclusively from Greek-language sources. In *On Letters*, we witness the return of the invention of Slavonic from its temporary Latinate milieu back into the fold of Byzantine intellectual influence. But this transition is not back into the world view of the *VC* and its Byzantine supremacy, but a new hybrid culture of Slavonic speakers with a Greek education.

The author of *On Letters* seems to have gone to some lengths through Greek-language literature to find all the possible ways of diminishing the sanctity of Greek and with it, reducing Greeks to Hellenes. Widely used Greek grammatical texts allowed our author to reveal the paganism of the founders of the Greek alphabet. Likewise, anti-Hellenism of early Christian writers, such as Tatian and Theodoret, proved a valuable resource in diminishing the sanctity of the Greek

[71] *On Letters*, 9.17–23.

people, who were given rhetoric, not divine scripture, at the fall of Babel. Whilst the exact source used in *On Letters*, with its innovative addition of the Jews to the ancient peoples, has yet to be identified, it is clearly one of a number of early Greek-language critiques of Hellenism, concerned with elevating Hebrew and scripture. Eusebius of Caesarea's *Praeparatio Evangelica*, already suggested by Jagic in the nineteenth century, certainly shares our author's sentiment, even if does not appear to be the direct source:

> *ἄλλα γὰρ παρ᾽ ἄλλων ἀποματτόμενοι μαθήματα γεωμετρίαν μὲν παρ᾽ Αἰγυπτίων ἔσχον, ἀστρολογίαν δὲ παρὰ Χαλδαίων καὶ αὖ πάλιν ἕτερα παρ᾽ ἑτέρων· οὐδὲν δὲ παρά τισιν ἄλλοις οἷόν τινες αὐτῶν τὸ παρ᾽ Ἑβραίοις ἀγαθὸν εὕραντο. τοῦτο δὲ ἦν ἡ τοῦ τῶν ὅλων θεοῦ γνῶσις καὶ ἡ τῶν οἰκείων θεῶν κατάγνωσις*[72]
>
> For by copying different sciences from different [peoples], they [the Greeks] got geometry from the Egyptians, and astrology from the Chaldeans, and other things again from other [peoples]; but nothing from any others like that good which they found from the Hebrews. This was knowledge of the God of everything, and the rejection of their own deities.

By putting together these two kinds of text, a grammatical history of the alphabet and an early Christian assault on Hellenism, *On Letters* makes a strong case not only against Greek, but against the holiness of its people, both historic and contemporary.

One could be tempted to say, in light of the discussion in Chapter 3, that there is something Ignatian about the position of the author of *On Letters*: like the proponents of Ignatios, our author sees grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy as antithetical to Christian piety. But similarly to the *VM*'s use of the Ecumenical Councils, the position of *On Letters* is more extreme than any discourse within Byzantine intellectual culture. *On Letters* both denounces Hellenic learning in the past *and* associates the Hellenes with contemporary Greek speakers. The totality of these arguments is damning and would not be to the liking of even the staunchest Ignatian supporter: for the author of *On Letters*, Greek is not the oldest language, it is not a holy language, and nor are its speakers holy or sacred in any way. This starkly contradicts contemporary Byzantine discourses, such as that of the new 'chosen people' or in the words of Shay Eshel, Elect Nation, which sought to elevate the sanctity of the Byzantines as the new Israel and became especially strong from the eighth century onwards.[73] This Old Testament discourse had

[72] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Preparation for the Gospel*, in *Eusebius Werke, Band 8: Die Praeparatio evangelica*, ed. K. Mras, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1954–6), 10.4.28–30.

[73] Mike Humphreys argues for instance that the reform of law, especially with the imperial code of the *Ekloga* of 741, propagated the idea of Byzantium as a new 'Chosen People', and subsumed Justinianic Law to that of the Old Testament. See: M. Humphreys, *Law, Power and Imperial Ideology in*

ethnic specificity, and elevated the Byzantines over others, in contrast with a more inclusive idea of the Christian church as universal to all believers regardless of ethnos.

But where does this leave Constantine-Cyril? Although Cyril was already somewhat de-Hellenised in the *VM* which reduced his disputations to brief summaries and entirely dispensed with his education, there is no doubt that it remained known to the authors of the *VC* and *VM* that Cyril and Methodios were Byzantines, came from Thessaloniki, and spoke Greek. This is undeniable even when the *VM* seeks to stress the brothers' strong connections to the Slavs. By contrast, in *On Letters*, Cyril is portrayed as the very opposite of the Greeks. His ethnic or linguistic identity is erased entirely. Simply put, 'the Slavonic letters are holier and more venerable, for a holy man has created them, while the Greek [letters]—pagan Hellenes'.[74]

The categorical imbalance in the qualifications here is crucial. The Greek alphabet was invented by people defined and categorised by their religion, pagan, and their ethnicity, as Hellenes (as noted above, this text considers linguistic practice and ethnic markers as interchangeable). The Slavonic alphabet was invented by a man without an ethnic marker, but only a religious one: sanctity suffices, Cyril is holy and that is all he is. This generalisation is very much at odds with the *VM*, and its narrative innovations to the early lives of Cyril and Methodios, which forge a personal relationship between the brothers, and especially Methodios, and the Slavs. There is no attempt in *On Letters* to suggest Cyril knew Slavonic, had personal compassion for the Slavs or was one. He is simply a man sent by God, 'righteous and sincere'.[75]

In short, as it elevates the sanctity of Slavonic, *On Letters* sanctifies Cyril by abstracting him from a specific historical time and place and from any linguistic or ethnic identity. In so doing, it paganises Greek, its alphabetic history and its speakers, as Hellenes whose linguistic identity is the same as their ethnic disposition and reducible to grammar, rhetoric, philosophy, and no more.

Tensions in *On Letters*

As already noted in the case of Cyril and his identity, the thesis–antithesis of *On Letters* relies on obfuscation, whether that be of the number of letters in the Greek

the Iconoclast Era, c.650–850 (Oxford, 2014), pp. 81–128. Shay Eshel traces this discourse in other types of texts and notes similarly that it is the product of Byzantine decline in the face of Arab conquests. He stresses that it became particularly strong after the 843 Triumph of Orthodoxy and can be found in various letters to Tsar Symeon of Bulgaria from the early tenth century: S. Eshel, *The Concept of the Elect Nation in Byzantium* (Leiden, 2018), pp. 10, 86–138, esp. pp. 122–33.

[74] 'словѣньска писмена сватѣиша сѫтъ и чьстьнѣиша, сватъ бо мѫжь сътворилъ ꙗ ѥстъ, а грьчьска елълини погании', *On Letters*, 12.9–11.

[75] 'правьдьна и иста', ibid., 2.8.

alphabet, or of the background of Cyril as it is found in the *VC* and *VM*. It is clear within the text itself, however, that these categorical distinctions are not as neat as they appear, and this tension shows in *On Letters*. The tension reveals itself in a number of inconsistencies within the text, which are especially revealing of its authorial concerns.

The first source of tension is to do with the ethnic profile of the alphabet. As presented in the treatise, Cyril is an un-ethnicised holy man, opposite to Greeks or Hellenes in his sanctity. Yet *On Letters* concedes that he 'created thirty letters and eight for them, some according to the system of the Greek letters while others in accordance with Slavonic speech'.[76] Although the author goes to great lengths to stress the profound difference between the invention of Slavonic by a sacred man, and the compilation of Greek letters by a group of pagans, they nonetheless admit that many Slavonic letters were based on Greek ones. If the text is willing to wildly misrepresent the number of letters in the Greek alphabet, why is it unwilling to misrepresent Slavonic's debt to pagan Greek letters?

The second source of tensions is the issue of change over time. *On Letters* makes a strong case for the superiority of Slavonic on the basis of its invention in one moment by one holy man, and on the convergence of this moment of invention with the moment of the translation of the holy scriptures. In short, 'Constantine, called Cyril, both created the letters and translated the books in a few years. But they [i.e the Greeks] [were] many and over many years'.[77] In the text more generally, nothing good happens 'over many years' nor is anything good corrected or changed over time. The Slavs wrote with lines and notches and were pagan for 'many years' ('мъногa лѣтa').[78] The Greeks wrote with Phoenician letters for 'many years' ('мъногa лѣтa').[79] And in the end, 'many in many years barely gathered' the totality of Greek letters.[80] But the author's own definitive statement of the fast completion of the Slavonic alphabet is undermined by a question from the imagined opponents:

> Аще ли кѣто реѵетъ, яко 'Нѣстъ оустроилъ добрѣ, да по немь сѧ постраяжтъ и ище', отвѣтъ реѵемъ симъ: 'И грьѣьскы такожде мъногашьды сѫтъ постраяли акила и симъахъ, и по томь и ини мъноги'. Оудобѣе бо нестъ послѣжде потворити, неже прьвое сътворити[81]
>
> And if someone says: 'He has not ordered [them] well, if after him they are still being reordered', we say [this] answer to them: 'And Aquila and Symmachos also

[76] 'сътвори имъ л писмена и и, ова оубо по чиноу грьѣьскыихъ писменъ, ова же по словѣньсцѣ рѣчи', ibid., 2.9–12.

[77] 'Константинъ, нарицаемыи Кирилъ, и писмена сътвори и кънигы прѣложи в малѣхъ лѣтѣхъ. А они мъноги мъногы лѣты', ibid., 12.1–6.

[78] Ibid., 1.25.

[79] Ibid., 10.3. Identical with the above phrase in 1.25.

[80] 'И тако мъноги многыими лѣты ледва събьраша', ibid., 10.17–18.

[81] Ibid., 13.1–9.

> reordered the Greek [ones] many times, and after them many [others]'. For it is easier to add [to a creation] than to initially create.

The mention of Aquila and Symmachos, who were first- and second-century AD translators of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek, indicates that this passage is concerned with translation rather than letter invention. Yet the author's riposte seems rather weak. They concede the very thing for which they have spent much of the text reproaching the Greeks. Namely, that alphabet compilations and scriptural translations go on for many years and change over time. The admission that it is harder to invent than it is to amend must reflect contemporary practice, perhaps the ongoing amendment of scriptural translations in Slavonic. It does the author no favours to insert it if it does not. I will return to this question of stability in alphabet and translation in Chapter 9.

The third tension within the text is the relationship between abstraction and specificity in the invention of the alphabet. Throughout the text, as discussed above, Cyril's invention of the letters is framed as an event in the relative chronology of the Slavonic peoples: it came after paganism, and after conversion, and the use of Greek and Latin. However, it is not portrayed as an event that occurred in a historically specific place or time, as in the *VC* and *VM*. God sends Cyril to the Slavonic people, not Emperor Michael. There is no sign of the narrative mission to Moravia, or its missionary concerns. Yet knowledge of the invention of Slavonic is crucial to the argument of the text, and thus at its conclusion the author offers a date for the invention:

> Въ врѣмена Михаила, цѣсаря грьчьска, и Бориса къназа блъгарьска, и растица, къназа моравьска, и Коцьля къназа блатьньска[82]
>
> In the time of Michael, *Caesar* of the Greeks, and Boris, *kniaz* of the Bulgarians, and Rastislav, *kniaz* of the Moravians, and Kočel, *kniaz* of the Balatons

The text proceeds to give the year 6363 since the beginning of the world, either 855 or 863 depending on whether the author was using the so-called 'Constantinopolitan' or Alexandrian estimation of the beginning of the world.[83] By giving a time, and a list of rulers who ruled at that time, *On Letters* also offers a broad geographic space within which the alphabet was created, and thus brings Moravian and Pannonian rulers as well as the Byzantine emperor into view.

Still, the author consciously avoids naming the specific place in which this occurred, thus choosing not to give primacy to Moravia. If the author had these names to hand, it is likely that they also had some version of the mission to

[82] Ibid., 14.21–27.

[83] This has been the source of some debate. For a summary of the positions and an argument for the Alexandrian, and therefore the later 863 date, see: Kuev, *Chernorizets*, pp. 85–95.

Moravia, even if only an oral or abbreviated one. They have chosen to omit it, however, and put in its place a dating year. The dating year puts Rastislav and Kočel, those involved in the early mission, in the same list as Boris of Bulgaria, who is not mentioned as having any role whatsoever in the *VM* and *VC*. This clearly points to the fact the text was composed in the Balkans, and likely under the rule of the polity of Bulgaria, as scholarship has long suggested.[84] This addition also makes clear that *On Letters* seeks to transform the moment of alphabet invention, fixed in time, place, and political circumstance in ninth-century Moravia, into an event in universal Slavonic history, a transition from illiteracy to literacy, which occurred in all these Slavonic-speaking places at once.

To conclude this section, in short, *On Letters* presents a binary opposition between Greek and Slavonic, in nature, creation, and inventor, which is very much a reinvention of the stories we find in the *VC* and *VM*. By seeking to abstract the moment from its particular historical context into one that is central to the abstract history of the Slavs, the author performs a number of manipulations to the kinds of materials probably available to them. This new argument for Slavonic, however, is not failproof, and a number of tensions are evident within the short treatise. These, I argue, can help us identify the kind of context this text emerges from. In the next chapter, I turn to precisely this: given *what* the text is trying to argue, *who* is the text arguing with?

[84] In other and later manuscripts from the East Slavonic world, this list of rulers is expanded with the addition of names from early Rus, such as Riurik, Vladimir, and Olga. However, Boris is present in all traditions. See: Veder, *Utrum in Alterum*, p. 149 for Boris, and p. 150, esp. traditions a and a for Rus.

9

Slavonic and Greek Bookmen in the Tenth-Century Balkans

This chapter seeks to situate *On Letters* in its contemporary milieu. It suggests that *On Letters* is neither an attack on Cyrillic nor on the Byzantine clergy as has previously been argued, and that both of these positions have been shaped by a theory of ethnicity, which assumes it to be impossible for Slavonic speakers to oppose Slavonic literacy. Instead, I posit that the text is arguing against bilingual Slavonic–Greek speakers, who were likely literate in both, but were nonetheless resisting the use of Slavonic writing, or showing what the author considers undue reverence for Greek. *On Letters* seeks to create division, between Slavonic and Greek speakers and bookmen or scribes, in an environment in which such categories were clearly fluid. Some of the premises that the text opposes may be glimpsed in other contemporary texts from the tenth century. These demonstrate both ambiguity with respect to their authors' personal self-identification as Slavs or Byzantines, and some possible reverence for the Greek language. In short, although *On Letters* survives in over a hundred and forty manuscripts and has become in some sense the hegemonic reading of the invention of Slavonic, I suggest that in the tenth-century Balkans, this text was an assault on a contemporary consensus of bilingualism, identarian fluidity, and some hesitation to the adoption of the new Slavonic literacy.

On Letters and its context pose a very different set of challenges to those posed by the *VC* and *VM*. With the latter two texts, even though the precise location of authorship, Moravia or Rome, seemed at first unclear, one obvious place to start was a generic comparison: contemporary hagiography between Rome and Constantinople. *On Letters*, on the other hand, is quite clearly written in the Balkans, in the aftermath of the Moravian mission. That much is made obvious by the addition of Boris to the list of rulers of relevance to the alphabet invention, and by its shift away from the Latin preoccupations of the *VM*, and towards a Byzantine set of sources. But a genre-based context for a comparative intellectual analysis of *On Letters* is not forthcoming. There is no particular historic type of alphabet-defence that can be found in the Byzantine tradition, in this instance the obvious place to look. As a result of its peculiarity, the text has been named an apologia, a polemic, a philological treatise, a grammatical preface, or an encyclopaedic entry.[1]

[1] For a full list see: Kh. Trendafilov, 'Symeon v Pliska', *Preslavska knizhovna shkola*, 17 (2017), pp. 177–92, at p. 188.

Inventing Slavonic: Cultures of Writing between Rome and Constantinople. Mirela Ivanova, Oxford University Press.
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There certainly was interest in understanding or praising alphabets in the Middle Ages—seen in Carolingian scholars' newfound attention to the Latin alphabet, for example, or the tenth-century Georgian short hymn by John Zosimos entitled *Praise and Exultation of the Georgian Language*.[2] But these are of little help in contextualising *On Letters*. Carolingian scholars' interest is academic, and largely un-polemical, whereas Zosimos' polemic is written in Palestine or Mount Sinai, and mourns the decline of Georgian in his homeland: 'buried' for now, Zosimos hopes Georgian will emerge victorious and witness the Second Coming.[3]

As a result, the structure of this analysis will break with the patterns set up for the *VC* and *VM*, where I started with texts similar in form if not content, and moved on to texts similar in content but not in form. Here, I shall turn directly to texts scholars have accepted to be similar in content but different in form: namely the original compositions dated to or around the late ninth and early tenth century in the Balkans and mentioned above. In the first part of this section, I seek to point out a few ways in which *On Letters* is a very different text from its most probable Slavonic contemporaries. In the second, I posit an argument for the intended audience of the text by returning to the tensions identified at the end of Chapter 8.

The Texts of the Late Ninth- and Tenth-Century Balkans

There is a large body of translations and a small corpus of original compositions securely datable to the late ninth- and tenth-century Balkans. A significant number are locatable at the court of Symeon of Bulgaria (ca. 893–927) in particular, on the grounds of invocations of his patronage. These include: a translation of a collection of homilies of John Chrysostom associated with Symeon; translated homilies for every feast of the year and Anastasius of Alexandria's *Four Orations against the Arians* by Constantine of Preslav (the copyist Tudor Duksov's original MS does not survive, but a copy of his colophon where the text is dedicated to Symeon does); John the Exarch's aforementioned *Heavens* and his translation of Basil of Caesarea's *Hexaemeron*, which is dedicated to Symeon; and a number of religious texts compiled in a miscellany, now known as the *Izbornik 1073*, which is extant in a version dedicated to Sviatoslav of Rus, but was probably originally dedicated to Symeon as well.[4]

[2] C. Trefort, 'De inventoribus litterarum: The History of Writing as seen by Carolingian Scholars', *SVMMA*, 1 (2013), pp. 43–58. J. Zosime, *Praise and Exultation of the Georgian Language*, trans. D. Rayfield in his, *The Literature of Georgia: A History* (London, 2010), pp. 34–5. It is used as a relevant comparison for *On Letters*, in K. Kuev, *Chernorizetz Khrabur* (Sofia, 1967), p. 75; B. Martin-Hisard, 'La langue slave, la langue géorgienne et Byzance au Xe siècle', *Byzantinoslavica*, 50 (1989), pp. 33–45.

[3] D. Rayfield, *The Literature of Georgia: A History* (3rd ed., London, 2010), p. 33.

[4] No full edition of the Chrysostom homiliary exists, but for a thorough study of the sources, see: Miltenov, *Zlatostrui*; *starobulgarski khomilitichen svod, suzdaden po initsiativa na bulgarskiiat tsar Simeon: tekstologichesko i izvorosvedsko izsledvane* (Sofia, 2013). *Starobulgarskoto uchitelno evangelie*

Since most texts in medieval Slavonic lack a named patron, are otherwise undated, and are usually found in late medieval or early modern manuscripts, there is also a body of floating texts whose language has led philologists to point to an early medieval, south Slavonic providence. This means the texts were probably translated or compiled in the Balkans but if and when exactly remains unknowable. These texts include translations of Byzantine histories such as the *Chronicle* of John Malalas, the *Chronicle* of George Synkellos, and the *Chronicle* of Theophanes Confessor, and what Willian Veder has argued to be a series of interwoven florilegia of various theological texts dating from the tenth century and (perhaps less persuasively) compiled at the Bulgarian court.[5]

Although the body of translations or compilations is fairly large, certainly in comparison to the body of texts we can firmly date to Moravia, datable original compositions remain a rarity from the late ninth and early tenth centuries.[6] They are limited mostly to prefaces: Constantine of Preslav's *Prologue to the Gospel Homiliary*, which includes the *Alphabetical Prayer*, an acrostic introducing his homiliary, some short words of introduction, and a single original homily of the fifty-one collected in his *Didactic Gospel*; the preface to John the Exarch's *Heavens* and to the *Hexaemeron*, and finally of course, *On Letters*.[7]

These aside, once again, a handful of texts float undated and un-datable, but linguistics and morphology point to the early medieval Balkans. Two such texts are introductions to gospel lectionary translations. The first is a text I shall refer to

na Konstantin Preslavski, eds. M. Tikhova, E. V. Ukhanova (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2012). Only the third oration against the Arians has been edited with a parallel Greek text. Constantine of Preslav, *Four Orations Against the Arians*, in *Sv. Atanasii Aleksandriiski vtoro slovo protiv Arianite (v starobugraski prevod)*, ed. P. Penkova (Sofia, 2015); John the Exarch, *Heavens*. John the Exarch, *Hexaemeron*, in *Shestodnev Ioanna ekzarkha Bolgarskogo*, eds. G. S. Barankova and V. V. Mil'kov (St Petersburg, 2001); Ioan Ekzarkh, *Shestodnev*, trans. N. Kochev (Sofia, 1981). The *Izbornik 1073* is published both as a Rus and as a Bulgarian source in: *Izbornik Sviatoslava 1073 goda* (Moscow, 1983); *Simeonov sbornik v tri toma: po Sviatoslavoviaat prepis ot 1073*, 3 vols. (Sofia, 1991–2015).

[5] See: S. Franklin, 'Malalas in Slavonic', in E. Jeffreys et al., eds., *Studies in Malalas* (Sydney, 1990), pp. 276–86; George Synkellos, *Chronicle*, in A.-M. Totomanova, ed., *Slavianskata versiia na khronikata na Georgi Sinkel (izdanie i komentar)* (Sofia, 2008); Theophanes Confessor, *Chronicle*, in A.-M. Totomanova, ed., 'The *Chronicle* of Theophanes Confessor in the Slavic Tradition', in M. Jankowiak et al., eds., *Studies in Theophanes* (Paris, 2015), pp. 207–37. Veder has identified at least two other collections which he dates to tenth-century Bulgaria: the *Kniazhii Izbornik* and the *Izbornik of John the Sinner*. See: W. Veder, *Khiliada godini kato edin den: Zhivotut na tekstovete v pravoslavnoto slaviianstvo* (Sofia, 2005), pp. 120–85.

[6] On the issue of compilation versus composition in early Slavonic texts, see: R. Picchio, 'Compilation and Composition: Two Levels of Authorship in the Orthodox Tradition', *Cyrillomethodianum*, 5 (1981), pp. 1–5; W. Veder, 'The Treatment of Texts in Early Slavic Literature', repr. in his *Khiliada godini kato edin den* (Sofia, 2005), pp. 93–6.

[7] The *Alphabetical Prayer* in its oldest manuscript and the original homily: *Starobulgarskoto uchitelno evangelie na Konstantin Preslavski*, pp. 3–5. And in a critical edition: K. Kuev, *Azbuchnata molitva v slavianskite literaturi* (Sofia, 1974), pp. 170–5. The full preface and the text I use in this book is found in: Constantine of Preslav, *Prologue to the Gospel Homiliary*, in W. Veder, *Utrum in Alterum: A Study of the Beginnings of Text Transmission in Church Slavic* (Bloomington, IN, 1999), pp. 153–7. Prologues found in: John the Exarch, *Heavens*, pp. 2–28. Ioan Exarkh, 'Prolog kum *Nebesa*', trans., K. Ivanova and S. Nikolova, in *Turzhestvoto na Slovoto: Zlatniyat vek na bulgarskata knizhnina: letopisi, zhitiya, ritorika, poeziya* (Sofia, 1995), pp. 181–3. John the Exarch, *Hexaemeron*, pp. 301–8.

as *Annunciation to the Gospel* by a Constantine.[8] It is the introduction to a gospel lectionary translation which survives in a thirteenth-century manuscript of Serbian recension, where it is ascribed to some Constantine.[9] Scholars have long remained divided over whether it is Constantine-Cyril himself or Constantine of Preslav, but the simplest solution may be once again that there were in fact more than two people in the early medieval Byzantino-Slavic world called Constantine.[10] The second gospel preface, which I shall refer to simply as *Anonymous Annunciation to the Gospel* is a partly corrupted text. It discusses translation and as a result of this was, until Vaillant's convincing case to the contrary, associated with John the Exarch.[11]

These original compositions discuss the new alphabet, its purpose and its use, albeit in brief, so they will serve as one probable context for the argument of *On Letters*.[12] Existing studies have already explored texts such as John the Exarch's *Heavens* alongside our treatise, but their concerns have tended to be twofold: either seeking Slavonic language sources for *On Letters* or seeking to pin the treatise's authorship onto a known figure.[13] Searching for sources in the surviving Slavonic corpus can be a somewhat futile task, given that what survives in Slavonic translation was most probably the tip of the iceberg of once-extant Greek language materials in the Balkans. Meanwhile, the search for an author has run through all the named individuals from our period, and recently come back to Tsar Symeon himself. In the words of Khristo Trendafilov, after pointing to some (unconvincing) similarities between *On Letters* and John the Exarch's work:

[8] *Annunciation to the Gospel* by a Constantine: A. Vaillant, 'Une poésie vieux-slave: La Préface de l'Évangile', *Revue des études slaves*, 33 (1956), pp. 7–25; 'Proglas kum evangelieto', trans. Ivanova and Nikolova, *Turzhestvo na slovoto*, pp. 12–15.

[9] The thirteenth-century manuscript is found in the Hilandar Monastery collection, under shelf mark HM.SMS.23. I am grateful to the Hilandar Research Library at Ohio State University, and the monks of the monastery for granting me access to the microfilm during my time in Ohio.

[10] Those who consider it is Constantine-Cyril, for instance include: E. Georgiev, *Dve proizvedeniia na Sv. Kirila* (Sofia, 1938). Vaillant, dismisses the Philosopher and sensibly notes that this does not therefore mean it *has* to be Constantine of Preslav, but does concede that the language and topic suggest this was produced at around the turn of the tenth century, and so the Preslav scholar seems as good a candidate as any. Vaillant, 'Une poésie vieux-slave', p. 25.

[11] *Anonymous Annunciation to the Gospel*: A. Vaillant, 'La préface de l'Evangéliaire vieux-slave', *Revue des études slaves*, 24 (1948), pp. 5–20.

[12] Two obvious texts I omit are the homilies attributed to Clement of Ohrid dealing with Cyril and Methodios. This due to concerns about their attribution to their alleged author and therefore of their composition in our period. All texts associated with Clement are printed as a corpus, but the criteria for selection vary from the use of his name on the MS, to the topic being perceived as relevant to him, to texts which utilise a model homily which is assigned to him, even though surely the purpose of a model homily is that anyone could use it. Kliment Okhridski, *Subrani Suchineniia*, 3 vols. (Sofia, 1970–7).

[13] See for instance: Kh. Trendafilov, 'Preslavski izvori za traktata "Za Bukvite" na Chernorizets Hrabur', *Preslavska knizhovna shkola*, 7 (2003), pp. 294–306, at pp.301-5 ; K. Ivanova, 'Edin veroiaten iztochnik na "Za Bukvite" ot Chernorizets Khrabur', in *Literaturoznanie i folkloristika. Sbornik v chest na 70-godishninata na akad. P. Dinekov* (Sofia, 1983), pp. 82–9, esp. pp. 82–8.

> Това, което все пак може да се каже е, че За Буквите отговаря исцяло на замислите на цар Симеон и на идейно най-близките до него книжовници. Вероятно трактатът е написан от един от тях, по инициатива на владетеля и с неговото дейно участие.[14]
>
> That which can be said, after all, is that *On Letters* fully corresponds to the intentions of Tsar Symeon and to the bookmen closest to him ideologically. It is likely that the treatise was written by one of them, at the initiative of the ruler and with his active participation.

Once again, I refrain from attributing imperial agency from silence. Instead, my argument here is more tentative than it was in Chapters 3 and 6, due to the uncertainties of dating and location. I consider the Slavonic corpus as a potential discursive milieu in which the ideas of *On Letters* can be assessed. In other words, I view the texts below as indicative of the *kinds* of ideas available in the early medieval Balkans, rather than the specific texts to which *On Letters* may be responding.

There are a number of overlapping concerns to be found amidst the texts identified above, but I wish to pick out two: namely, their portrayal of the 'Slavs' as a category, and the role of Greek and the question of translation. After addressing these, I turn to the key question that has preoccupied scholars: to whom is *On Letters* addressed?

As I have argued thus far, the *VC* and *VM* are aimed at Byzantium or the Latin West, and take the 'Slavs' as the uncritical object of the Cyrillo-Methodian mission. In the *VM* in particular, the relationship between Methodios and the Slavs becomes instrumental to the case for the mission's success. This is done by constructing an association between Methodios and the category the *VM* considers as 'Slavs'. There are Slavs, out there, Methodios knows them and their customs thanks to his imperial appointment over them, and they are relatively unflinching in their support of his bishopric. But little thought is given to these Slavs, or what exactly makes up their identification: why would the Slavs near Thessaloniki have the same customs as those in Moravia? It is fair to say neither of our hagiographies is concerned with presenting the Slavs as a complex or divided group of people.

In the *Alphabetical Prayer* of Constantine of Preslav, some of the coherence assumed in the *VM* is evident. The author addresses God on behalf of the 'Slavonic tribe' ('словѣньско племѧ'), as a unit which now 'seeks the word of the gospel'.[15] But Constantine also addresses a more immediate group, asking 'my brothers, fathers, and sons' to not look down upon him. These brethren are not ethnicised,

[14] Trendafilov, 'Preslavski izvori za traktata "Za Bukvite" na Chernorizets Hrabur', p. 306. More recently, Trendafilov has made his argument much more extreme, arguing that Symeon wrote *On Letters* originally in Greek shortly after returning from Constantinople. Trendafilov, 'Symeon v Pliska', p. 185.

[15] 'ишѣтъ евангельска слова', 'братиє моя, отъци же и сыновє', Constantine of Preslav, *Prologue to the Gospel Homiliary*, pp. 153–7.

and most probably refer to monks or clerics. So, there is some distance between the 'Slavonic tribe' seeking God, and the religious companions of Constantine. Whilst this addressed audience clearly spoke Slavonic, their more important characteristic of identification appears to be religious, as brothers, fathers, and sons. John the Exarch's prologue to *Heavens* opens with an account acknowledging that Constantine created 'the letters of the Slavonic books' ('писмена словѣньскыхъ кънигъ'), and also addresses some 'brothers' without referencing their ethnicity.[16] In fact, John Exarch never moves from 'Slavonic books' to 'Slavonic people'.

The only surviving text which breaks with this ambiguity between the Slavs out there in the world and the addressees of the author is the *Annunciation to the Gospel* by a Constantine. Here, the audience of the text is explicitly the Slavs: 'Listen to this, Slavs' ('слышите, Словѣне, си'), 'listen Slavonic peoples, listen to the Word for it came from God'.[17] Still, the author's identity is not stated: the Slavs are addressed as 'you' not as 'we'.

This ambiguity of our authors' identity makes sense given that their activity is one of translation.[18] As some historians of nationalism have suggested, cultural, linguistic, or other kinds of identities are produced and at the very least sustained in texts.[19] All three of the above texts consciously contribute to a new written culture in Slavonic. This process of (cultural and textual) translation seeks to produce a new cultural identity, a Slavonic tribe or people, but it is inevitably the case that its producers' own linguistic and cultural backgrounds must be mixed, or liminal, for them to be the vehicles of this translation. So whilst Slavic peoples out there in the world are invoked, perhaps recognising their own liminality, our authors do not explicitly speak of themselves in these terms.

Translation is a case in point when it comes to ambiguity of identity. All the aforementioned texts share the trope of authorial humility. As Constantine of Preslav notes, he was 'afraid to begin' his translation of the gospel lectionary, 'having seen the worry of the words to be beyond my incomprehension and strength'.[20] Or in the words of John the Exarch in the preface to *Hexaemeron*, 'so poor is our mind, that having nothing in our own home, it put together these words using [the words of] others'.[21]

[16] John the Exarch, *Heavens*, p. 2.

[17] 'слышите оубо, народи Словѣньсти, слышите слово, отъ Бога бо приде', *The Annunciation to the Gospel* by a Constantine, p. 10, 9. 24–5.

[18] I mean this both in the mundane sense, but also as an alternative to the paradigm of 'reception' of Byzantine culture, as proposed by Simon Franklin, 'The Reception of Byzantine Culture by the Slavs', repr. in his *Byzantium—Rus—Russia: Studies in the Translation of Christian Culture* (Aldershot, 2002), pp. 384–5.

[19] Maxim developed by B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 2006). Put in roughly these words in: S. Plokhy, *The Origins of the Slavic Nations: Premodern Identities in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 4.

[20] 'оубояхъ же са начати', 'трьпьтъ словесъ видѣвъ, выше недоумѣния и силы моея сѫщь', Constantine of Preslav, *Prologue to the Gospel Homiliary*, 4.40–2.

[21] 'сице бо есть ниции нашь оумъ, да не имы в домѣ своемь ничесо же, чюжими възгради словеса си', John the Exarch, *Hexaemeron*, p. 308, 6b 23–5. 7a 1–2.

But in addition to this more generic humility, a number of texts focus their apologia on translation, and specifically on deviation from the Greek text at hand. John the Exarch's preface to *Heavens*, is the most famous and elaborate example. Here, as in *On Letters*, Hellenic and Greek are one: Methodios translated 'from the Hellenic language, that is to say Greek'.[22]

> молю же вы почитающаѧ книгыи сия молиті бога за мя грѣшьника, сь добромысльюмь и вънимания почитания творити и пращати мя идежде мняще мя различь глаголы преложьша. Не бо равьнѣ ся можеть присно полагати юлиньскъ ѧзыкъ въ инъ прѣлагаемъ. И всякомоу языкоу въ инъ прелагаемоу то же бываеть. Небонъ иже глаголъ въ иномь языцѣ красьнъ, то въ другѣмь некрасьнъ, иже въ иномь страшьнъ, то въ дроугѣмь нестрашьнъ [...][23]
>
> And I beg you, who will read these books, to pray to God for me the sinner, to read with grace and care, and to forgive me where you believe I have put down words differently. For it is not always possible to render the Greek language equivalently in another translated [language]. And in every language rendered into another, it will be thus. Since that word which is pleasant in one language, is then unpleasant in another, and which is fearsome in one [language], is then not fearsome in another [...]

The text carries on by pointing to words which have a different gender in Greek and Slavonic, such as the masculine Greek word for river, 'potamos' ('ποταμός'), rendered by the feminine Slavonic 'rieka' ('рѣка').[24] A similar set of examples is given in the second, and partly corrupted, *Anonymous Annunciation to the Gospel* edited by Vaillant. It is due to this similarity of theme that the text has been associated with John the Exarch, but as Vaillant clearly demonstrates this is a separate text (although I disagree with his attempt to assign it to Constantine-Cyril.)[25] Here too, gender is involved, but a more sacred reason is given in addition:

> <подь>визахьмь сѧ да быхьмь исто<вою> положили ... <е>вангелии боѧште сѧ приложити ... да аште и хоудѣ сѧ кьде обрѧштеть приложено <нѣч>то то да разоумѣють чьтѧ. и акоже по ноужди то <юс>ть сьтворило а не дързостиѫ ни сьмѣниюмь[26]

[22] 'отъ елиньска ѧзыка юже юсть гръчьскъ', John the Exarch, *Heavens*, p. 4.

[23] Ibid., pp. 22–4. [24] Ibid., pp. 24–6.

[25] *Anonymous Annunciation to the Gospel*, pp. 6–11. Attribution to Cyril: Vaillant, 'La préface', p. 18. One can and is indeed tempted to collect a body of scholarship on authorship, which if one is careful and selective may render the entirety of anonymous surviving early Slavonic literature either to Constantine-Cyril or Symeon's pen.

[26] The angle brackets are Vaillant's additions, the dots indicate a gap in the original text, unlike the dots in square brackets used elsewhere in this book which indicate my omission. *Anonymous Annunciation to the Gospel*, 16–20.

> we were striving to lay down the true [form]…fearing to add to the gospel… and where anything small is to be found added, so that the [person] reading could comprehend [it], know that it was done by necessity and neither with boldness nor temerity.

In their decision to explain deviation, both of these texts reveal some respect for the source language, in part, and certainly in the second example, this was to do with the holiness of scripture. Whilst this may just be generic posturing, it is worth considering that some actual reverence to source text is not improbable. John the Exarch, Constantine of Preslav, and the vast body of dark matter that makes up the translators of the early medieval Balkans were at the very least bilingual authors, and it is most probable that they acquired both literacy and Christianity in Greek first. What this meant definitively for their personal sense of self remains inaccessible, but it is not improbable that these authors saw the Greek texts they began with as in some sense the originals, and in the case of New Testament texts in particular, as in some sense holy. Scholars have been quick to judge our translators on the Slavonic culture they sought to produce, rather than the bilingual culture from which they emerged.

As in the texts above, the Slavs are also presented as an entity out there in the world in *On Letters*. Moreover, like the Slavs of the *Alphabetical Prayer*, the Slavs of *On Letters* are also grammatically othered, 'God sent *them* Constantine' (my emphasis), not 'us'.[27] But there are some key differences between *On Letters* and its contemporaries. The first is that the text gives a rather more mature account of the level of Slavic Christianisation than the *Alphabetical Prayer*. In the latter, the Slavonic tribe has only just turned to conversion, whilst in *On Letters* these Slavs have already been christened and have now proceeded to greater piety by receiving literacy from God.[28]

There is also a collective 'we' in *On Letters* which is absent in other texts. This 'we' is defined not so much by ethnicity, as by position on the Slavonic alphabet: 'what do *we* say to *them* [i.e. those who object to Slavonic]?'(my emphasis), asks the author.[29] It is constructed against the antagonistic 'they'; once again not explicitly the 'Greeks' but those who object to Slavonic. This is a significant break with the narrative voices of the texts discussed so far, where, at best, the audience of brothers ('you') was to be instructed.

On Letters also breaks with the custom of translation apologetic found in the texts noted above. Greek texts are transformed to suit the author's argument and the Greek language and its history are exposed as Hellenic, pagan, and unholy in comparison with Slavonic. Rather than apologise for Greek words losing gender

[27] 'посълд имъ Конъстантъинъ', ibid., 2.6.
[28] *On Letters*, 1.6. [29] 'къ тѣмъ оуъто глаголемъ?', ibid., 8.18.

or being changed due to their connotations when transferred into Slavonic, *On Letters* posits a different argument altogether.

> нъ како можетъ сѧ пьсати добрѣ грьчьскыими писмены 'огъ' или 'животъ' или 'зѣло', или 'црькы' или 'чьловѣкъ' […] и ина подобьна симъ?[30]
>
> but how is it possible to write 'God' or 'life' or 'mightily' or 'action' or 'church' or '"person" […] and others similar to them, well with Greek letters?

Rather than dwell on what is lost in translation, the author focuses on what is gained by adopting the Slavonic alphabet to write in Slavonic: namely a full and accurate representation of the sounds of the Slavonic language. This shifts the issue from a question of whether one should translate at all, to a question about whether this translation into Slavonic should be into the Greek alphabet or into a new Slavonic alphabet. More specifically when it comes to scripture, the author of *On Letters* does not dwell on the difficulty of rendering holy texts across languages which preoccupies John Exarch and the anonymous author above. By contrast, the author of *On Letters* stresses the long history of translation of scripture, from Hebrew into Greek, and then the changes made within Greek by Aquila and Symmachos.

In short, *On Letters* does not 'fully correspond', in the words of Trendafilov, to the ideas of John the Exarch or Symeon, or any of the texts we can posit as its near contemporaries. Whether the author of *On Letters* had direct access to these texts in particular remains less relevant than the likelihood that these kinds of positions on Greek and on the Slavs as a category were available in their discursive milieu.

The text tackles the ambiguities of personal identity present in the prefaces discussed so far, with a clear attempt to disambiguate between the languages of Greek and Slavonic, and between the people who defend Greek rather than Slavonic. But it is crucial that, when carefully examined, the text does not refer to either those objecting to Slavonic (i.e. the 'they' of the text) or those defending the use of Slavonic (i.e. the 'we' of the text) in simple ethnic terms. Rather than target the disambiguation at either Slavs or Greeks in particular, these two groups of 'us' and 'them' are only fleshed out once in the text. In contrast to the usual 'us' and 'them' ambiguity, one question is posed more specifically:

> Аще бо възпросиши кънигъчия грьчьскыѣ, глаголѣ: 'къто вы ѥстъ писмена сътворилъ, или кънигы прѣложилъ?' То рѣдъци отъ нихъ вѣдатъ. Аще ли възпросиши словѣньскыѣ боукара, глаголѣ: 'Къто вы писмена сътворилъ ѥстъ или кънигы прѣложилъ?' То вьси вѣдатъ […][31]

[30] Ibid., 1.10–24. I have omitted 'дѣяние' ('action'), which Veder includes in this list but is not attested in any of his MS traditions, nor in any of the other editions of the text by Dzhambeluka-Kossova and Kuev discussed in the Introduction.

[31] Ibid., 14.1–9.

> And if you ask Greek bookmen, saying: 'Who created your letters, or translated your books?' Then few of them will know. But if you asked Slavonic bookmen: 'Who has created your letters or translated your books?' Then all know […]

The author, and their literati contemporaries in the early medieval Balkans, were undoubtedly both Greek- and Slavonic-language bookmen. *On Letters* is therefore a clear attempt to make a complex set of identities appear neat, to separate those using Greek from those using Slavonic, and to equate the former with opposition to Slavonic, and the latter with opposition to Greek. The author does this even with their choice of vocabulary. The word which I translate as (Slavonic) 'bookmen' ('boukaria' 'боукаря') is unattested elsewhere in old Slavonic texts, whereas the word which I translate as (Greek) 'bookmen' ('kuniguchiia' 'кънигоучия') is rather common.[32] The meaning of the rare word, namely scribes or learned men, is clear, but this looks like the author's attempt to derive a unique word for Slavonic bookmen from the Slavonic word for a 'letter' ('bouky') which in turn gives the word for 'alphabet' ('azbouka'). Slavonic bookmen are those who know the Slavonic letters. Meanwhile, this is differentiated from the Greek bookmen, whose is a more common, generic word for those literate, from the word for writing and book ('k'nigy'). Our author's innovation however does not seem to take off.

So, if as I have argued *On Letters* is quite unlike the prefaces discussed so far, who is it for?

On Letters, Audience, and Greek in the Early Medieval Balkans

Scholarly consensus in the early twentieth century considered *On Letters* to be an attack on the Byzantine Greek clergy still in Bulgaria after the arrival of Slavonic.[33] This reading hangs on one of the oldest tropes of Bulgarian historiography, and that is a hostility to Greek and Greek influence.[34]

Given the obvious problem that a treatise against the Byzantines written in Slavonic, a language they could not read, would not be particularly persuasive, this opinion has been largely abandoned.[35] Instead, scholars have settled on

[32] *LLP*, pp. 148, 91.

[33] V. Zlatarski, *Istoriia na Bulgarskata durzhava prez srednite vekove*, vol. 1.2: *Ot slavianizatsiata na Bulgarskata durzhava do padaneto na purvoto tsarstvo (852–1018)* (3rd ed., Sofia, 1995), p. 283. And also taken up by: Kuev, *Chernorizets*, pp. 20–5; D. Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500–1453* (London, 1971), p. 153. This argument still holds in some Bulgarian scholarship, see: D. Petkanova, *Chernorizets Khrabur* (Sofia, 1984), p. 81.

[34] This tendency is already there in the eighteenth century, and runs through the twentieth, intensified by the Balkan Wars: R. Daskalov, *Master Narratives of the Middle Ages in Bulgaria* (Leiden, 2021), pp. 41–2, 70.

[35] More recently, Trendafilov has tried to resurrect the case that the treatise was written against the Byzantine Greek clergy, by positing that it was originally written in Greek by Symeon. Trendafilov, 'Symeon v Pliska', p. 185.

reading *On Letters* as an inter-alphabetic polemic. Two alphabets which record Slavonic survive from the medieval period: Glagolitic, a script with letters less akin to Greek and Latin and more strokes per letter on average than either, and Cyrillic, a script much closer to Greek with additional letters to represent specific Slavonic vowels and consonants absent in Greek. Despite their misleading names, the former, Glagolitic, is associated with Constantine-Cyril. One of the reasons Glagolitic is considered older is that it is found under Cyrillic in palimpsested manuscripts, but never vice versa.[36] Still, it is clear the alphabets coexisted for a while. The list of the oldest Slavonic manuscripts, which nonetheless lack precise internal dating, has a mix of both manuscripts in Cyrillic and Glagolitic.[37] Even though most inscriptions from our period are in Cyrillic letters, Glagolitic ones have been found across the Balkans, and in the North East, the centre of Bulgarian political power.[38]

Due to this, the most common reading of *On Letters* is that it is a defence of one alphabet against the other, more usually of Glagolitic against Cyrillic, 'in the guise of Greek'.[39] The problem with this argument is that none of our sources ever specify the alphabet they are using or imply any animosity between different alphabets. This is why, as noted in the Introduction, I have refrained from dwelling on this alphabet difference altogether. At most, *On Letters* and the later Greek *Short Life of Clement* (possibly by the thirteenth-century bishop Demetrios Chomatenos), allude to changes being made to the unspecified Slavonic alphabet, but this could be as simple as small morphological alternations.[40]

Scholars have become so preoccupied with an inter-alphabet animosity despite our source's silence, therefore, on the basis of some common-sense assumptions about identity. These assumptions are sometimes said explicitly but often are simply assumed. Here is a summary by Floria which is uncharacteristically transparent:

[36] B. Floria, *Skazaniia o nachale slavianskoi pis'mennosti* (2nd ed., St Petersburg, 2000), p. 113. See, for instance, the Sinai Slavonic NF 3, double palimpsested codex: https://sinai.library.ucla.edu/viewer/ark:%2F21198%2Fz1rb7dmv (Last accessed: September 2023).

[37] K. Mirchev, *Starobulgarski ezik: kratuk gramatichen ocherk* (Sofia, 1972), pp. 10–12.

[38] K. Popkonstantinov and O. Kronsteiner, *Altbulgarische Inschriften*, 2 vols. (Salzburg, 1994–7), e.g. for Glagolitic in the north east: pp. 73, 167.

[39] From the early twentieth century, see seven scholars arguing for Glagolitic and six arguing for Cyrillic, listed in: E. Georgiev, *Raztsvetut na Bulgarskata literatura v IX–Xv* (Sofia, 1962), p. 327; more recently for Glagolitic, F. Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 500–1250* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 215; Floria, *Skazaniia*, p. 112; F. Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions amongst the Slavs, SS Constantine and Methodius* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1970), p. 251; A. Vlasto, *The Entry of the Slavs into Christendom: An Introduction to the Medieval History of the Slavs* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 177. Only Franklin dismisses this argument in: S. Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture in Early Rus, c.950–1300* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 194.

[40] Demetrios Chomatenos, *Short Life of Clement*, ed. A. Milev, *Grutskite zhitiia*, 14; *On Letters*, 13.1–9.

> Наконец, с опубликованием в 1963 г. специального исследования о Храбре чехословацкого исследователя В. Ткадльчика получил, думается, окончательное решение и вопрос: против кого был направлен трактат Храбра? […] Храбр вел полемику не с представителями византийского духовенства, […] а с образованными представителями болгарской знати и болгарского духовенства. Для них было самоочевидным, что славянский язык вполне может быть языком богослужения и письменности, но они возражали против того способа записи, который предлагали нашедшие приют в Болгарии ученики Константина и Мефодия.[41]

> In the end, with the publication of the special study concerning Khrabur by the Czechoslovakian scholar V. Tkadlčík in 1963, the question received what is considered its conclusive answer: who was the treatise of Khrabur written against? […] Khrabur was not polemicizing with the Byzantine clergy […] but the educated representatives of the Bulgarian elite and clergy. For them it was obvious that the Slavonic language was fully capable of being a language for religious worship and literacy, but they objected to the means of recording it [i.e. in Glagolitic], which were offered by the students of Constantine and Methodios, who found refuge in Bulgaria.

What is here assumed to be 'obvious' for the Bulgarian elite and clergy, rather appears to be what was obvious to scholars of the twentieth century: namely, that the primary causal force behind the actions of medieval speakers of Slavonic was their identity as speakers of Slavonic. In Bulgarian scholarship in particular, this assumption that Slavonic was an obvious and self-evident choice, has resulted in the invention of an unattested council led by Symeon which made Slavonic the 'official language' of the medieval polity. This council, and the contemporary politics of early twentieth-century Bulgaria which led to its invention, have been persuasively exposed in a recent article by Angel Nikolov, but this was much too late in the historiography of our text to challenge related assumptions about ethnicity, identity in texts, including *On Letters*, from late ninth- and early tenth-century Bulgaria.[42]

The question remains. Why is it impossible to contemplate that Slavonic speakers may have preferred not to write Slavonic? Why must the ability to speak Slavonic be considered the only category which defined the commitments of scribes in the early medieval Balkans? Personal self-identification cannot be reduced to language alone. We will never know whether a monk in the north-western Balkans identified first and foremost as a Bulgarian, a Slav, or speaker

[41] Floria, *Skazaniia*, p. 114.

[42] A. Nikolov, 'Convocatio Omni Regno: The Council of 893 and Its "Reflections" in Contemporary Historiography', in A. Kulik et al., eds., *The Bible in Slavic Tradition* (Leiden, 2016), pp. 547–60.

of Slavonic, a Roman, or speaker of Greek, or simply as a servant of God. These loyalties and attributes could be held at once or be activated at different times in different situations.[43] It is to oversimplify the intentions and intellectual abilities of medieval actors to assume them reducible to one or the other.

I argue instead, that *On Letters* is arguing against those who can speak Slavonic, who may well be capable of writing it, but who prefer to write in, or retain reverence for, Greek, not because they are 'Byzantine' clergy, nor because they consider themselves 'Greeks'. Just as personal self-identification cannot be reduced to language alone, so too individuals' and communities' choice of language cannot be reduced to their personal self-identification. There are a range of factors which may influence individuals' choices of language use. In the medieval Balkans, there were clear benefits, financial and career-related, to the ability to write in Greek, just as there were possible personal, aesthetic, or practical reasons why individuals may have considered supporting a new literate culture more trouble than it was worth.

I will start by demonstrating some literary and practical reasons why Greek may have appeared more appealing or, at the very least, a 'safe pair of hands' in contrast with Slavonic, regardless of the user's identity or background. I will then turn to some sociopolitically situated reasons which may have also contributed to the hesitation *On Letters* is trying to challenge.

First and foremost, learned or literary medieval Greek had a standardised grammar.[44] This was fully elaborated from at least as early as the fourth to fifth century AD, when Theodosios of Alexandria put together his *Canons*. The text offers full inflection tables for nouns and verbs.[45] Secondly, by the medieval period, scriptural texts in Greek had fairly stable traditions. To give an example: the Greek New Testament project at the University of Münster has provided data on the stability of the New Testament text in Greek in the Middle Ages.[46] To take just one reading: of the 2,900 Greek New Testament miniscule manuscripts, the text of John 7:9 has five variants, the first is attested in 1,463 manuscripts, the second in a hundred and forty-one, the third in fifty-six and the fourth in eight, and the last only in one manuscript.[47] This kind of proportion is fairly representative across the text, with majority readings being incredibly dominant. Of the

[43] I take my lead on these issues from: R. Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge, MA, 2004), esp. pp. 7–63.

[44] Learned Greek, in all its rigidity was stood somewhat apart from the more fluid vernacular Greek. For the difference, see: M. Hintenberger, 'Introduction', in his ed., *The Language of Byzantine Learned Literature* (Turnhout, 2014), pp. 1–12. It is this more rigid learned Greek that concerns me here.

[45] Theodosios of Alexandria, *Canons*, in *Grammatici Graeci*, ed. A. Hilgard, vol. 4.1 (repr. Hildesheim, 1965), pp. 3–42 (nouns), pp. 43–99 (verbs).

[46] 'New Testament Virtual Manuscript Room', University of Münster, http://ntvmr.uni-muenster.de/manuscript-workspace (Last accessed, September 2023).

[47] All data from ibid. Presented by Georgi Parpulov, 'The Byzantine Text of the Greek New Testament', *Late Antique and Byzantine Studies Seminar*, University of Oxford, Trinity Term, 2017.

thirty manuscripts dated securely to the tenth century, which concerns us, these texts have ca. ninety per cent majority readings, and at times ninety-five.

By contrast, no standard medieval Slavonic grammar survives. In the words of Zhivov about early Rus written culture, but equally pertinent for the early medieval Balkans, medieval scribes in Slavonic 'did not use grammatical textbooks or lexica, and they did not have the conceptions of a monolithic and all-encompassing linguistic standard'.[48] Instead, variations in both the orthography and morphology of surviving manuscripts suggest that there were local norms which could temporarily stabilise in a specific time or place, but that there was no universal medieval Slavonic grammatical, orthographic, and morphological textbook comparable to the aforementioned *Canons* of Theodosius of Alexandria for instance.[49] Grammar notwithstanding, major questions remain concerning the early Glagolitic alphabet too, some of which are as basic as whether it had thirty-six or thirty-eight letters.[50]

Likewise, the translation of scripture into Slavonic was by no means stable in the tenth century. This issue is heavily contested but it appears most likely, based on the philological study of surviving manuscripts, that most of the early translations done in Moravia, were either lost or retranslated by the time the Slavonic script arrived in the Balkans.[51] Even so, this was largely for liturgical purposes. Although translated in various parts earlier, no full translation of the bible was available in Slavonic until 1499.[52] There is no equivalent to the Münster New Testament Greek project for Slavonic, but were there to be, the results would no doubt show more difference.

[48] 'не пользивались ни грамматиками, н словарями и не располагали представлениями о едином и общеобязательном языковом стандарте', V. M. Zhivov, *Vostochno-slavianskoe pravopisanie XI–XIII veka* (Moscow, 2006), pp. 23–4.

[49] There are not enough manuscripts surviving and dated from the tenth century to study that period specifically, but the closest approximation, the manuscripts of early Rus, show orthographic and morphological variation between different places, in short lapses of time, between source manuscripts and copied manuscripts, and even between scribes within one manuscript. For a case study on a few linguistic features, and some general remarks, see: Zhivov, *Vostochno-slavianskoe pravopisanie*, pp. 9–76.

[50] For the other major questions around the alphabet and an attempt to offer some solutions: W. Veder, 'The Glagolitic Barrier', *Studies in Slavic and General Linguistics*, 34 (2008), pp. 489–501, esp. pp. 489–90. For a comparative study of Gagolitic abecedaria, demonstrating the letter variations in the attestation of the alphabet: W. Veder, 'The Glagolitic Alphabet as Text', in M-A. Dürrigl et al., eds., *Glagoljica i hrvatski glagolizam: Zbornik radova s međunarodnoga znanstvenog skupa povodom 100. obljetnice Staroslavenske akademije i 50. obljetnice Staroslavenskog instituta, Zagreb-Krk, 2.–6. listopada 2002* (Zagreb–Krk, 2004), pp. 375–87.

[51] This general pattern is clearly outlined with respect to the Psalter in: C. M. MacRobert, 'What Is a Faithful Translation? Changing Norms in the Church Slavonic Version of the Psalter', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 69 (1991), pp. 401–17, at p. 405. But can also be noted about the non-liturgical books of the Old Testament: *Starobulgarskiiat prevod na stariia zavet*, ed. S. Nikolova, 1 vol. (Sofia, 1998), p. xviii. And of the Old Slavonic New Testament Apostolos: I. Khristova-Shomova, *Sluzhebniiat apostol v slavianskata rukopisna traditsiia* (Sofia, 2004), p. 14.

[52] F. Thomson, 'The Intellectual Silence of Russia', repr. in his *The Reception of Byzantine Culture in Medieval Russia* (Aldershot, 1999), pp.viii–xxii p. xx.

In short, the surviving evidence of language practice and translation stability points very much to the opposite of what *On Letters* asserts about Slavonic. As discussed in Chapter 8, there is major tension in the text. On the one hand, the author accuses Greek of change over time and promotes Slavonic as sacred precisely due to its invention in a single moment in time by one holy man, who also translated the scriptures. On the other hand, the text acknowledges the critique that Slavonic continues to be changed over time. Clearly, the stability of Greek was appealing, otherwise the author would not have resorted to asserting the clearly inaccurate case for the stability of Slavonic. *On Letters* attempts to create stability simply by declaring it.

By contrast, medieval written Slavonic appears messy, unstable, and multialphabetic. Its scriptural translation was ongoing, and the difficulty it brought with it was not simply practical. As Mary MacRobert notes, translation of scripture is not simply about rendering words but about introducing 'people to a new and essentially different way of seeing the world, which their language may not be equipped to express'.[53] This is relevant beyond scripture too, as is made clear from the diligent Slavonic translation of George Choiroboskos' treatise *On Tropes*, which introduces key poetic terms like metaphor and allegory.[54] The poetical tropes' terminology is carefully calqued; compound words are translated into their components producing new Slavonic compound words. Whilst this is technically accurate, the specific terminology it introduced was foreign to the Slavonic language, not necessarily connected to native words or ways of seeing the world.

In short, the translator's task was not easy, nor were the tools at their disposal, namely the Slavonic alphabet and literary language, fixed and stable. Once we let go of the assumption that ethnic commitment is a necessary and given driver of the promotion of any literacy, it becomes clear that new literacies have little internal drive. Everything is stacked against them. Their success needs to be explained with reference to the sociopolitical circumstances in which they emerge, rather than taken as the given victory of ethnic liberation.

And there are some clear contemporary sociopolitical reasons why continuing to use Greek in the Balkans would be beneficial, both socially and financially. First and foremost, evidence strongly suggests that administrative work within the Bulgarian polity was done in Greek. Before converting to Christianity and prior to the arrival of the Slavonic alphabet, the early ninth-century Bulgarian elite already used Greek for their inscriptions. This was the case both for outward, Byzantine-facing texts, like peace treaties which defined territory lines, and for more inward-facing monuments like funerary inscriptions on behalf of the ruler

[53] MacRobert, 'What Is a Faithful Translation?', p. 403.

[54] George Choiroboskos, *On Tropes*, in Slavonic: *Simeonov Sbornik*, pp. 668–74. In Greek: *Rhetores Graeci*, ed. L. Spengel, vol. 3 (Leipzig, 1856), pp. 244–56.

for his bereaved elites.[55] These early inscriptions are largely 'official' in that they pertain to the ruler or ruling elite, the state, its boundaries, and history.

Official epigraphy in Greek continued into the late ninth and tenth centuries. The only two surviving inscriptions by or specifically concerned with Boris and Symeon as rulers are in Greek. The inscription concerning Boris mentions the conversion of Bulgaria in ca. 863–4 and may therefore predate the arrival of Slavonic.[56] The latter is an inscription dated to 904 recording the boundary ('ὅρος') between Bulgarians and Romans in the reign of Symeon, with two more inscriptions similar to it now lost.[57] The Greek text was found around twenty-two kilometres north of Thessaloniki, so is perhaps a better guide to language practice there than at court, but the more general absence of official inscriptions in Slavonic is peculiar if Slavonic was indeed an official court language.

Slavonic language inscriptions, on the other hand, proliferated over the course of the tenth century.[58] However, those collected in *Altbulgarische Inschriften*, the main published but by no means comprehensive such catalogue, point to a notable change in the inscription type: the Slavonic inscriptions although more plentiful, are much less 'official' or related to the state or rulers.[59] Only one text in Slavonic mentions Symeon: the funerary inscription of an elite man named Mostich, which notes that he served under both Symeon and his successor, Peter (ca. 927–69). It is not clear when exactly Mostich died, so it is difficult to know with certainty how much of a guide the language choice is to elite practices under Symeon.[60]

By contrast the lead seals of Bulgarian rulers Boris, Symeon, and his successor Peter reveal an uninterrupted use of Greek.[61] Letters surviving from Byzantium show that knowing Greek to communicate with those beyond the polity's borders was clearly needed. Although the correspondences of Theodoros Daphnopates

[55] See: V. Beshevliev, *Purvobulgarski nadpisi*, (Sofia, 1979) pp. 152–70 (peace treaties), pp. 212–25 (funerary inscriptions). And my discussion of these: M. Ivanova, 'The Madara Horseman and Triumphal Inscriptions under Krum (c. 803–814)', in M. Kinloch and A. MacFarlane, eds., *Trends and Turning Points: Constructing the Late Antique and Byzantine World* (Brill: Leiden, 2019), pp. 166–85.

[56] Beshevliev, *Purvobulgarski*, pp. 139–40, n.15.

[57] Ibid., pp. 170–2, n. 46. On the fascinating politics of the discovery of the monuments: A. Nikolov, 'Svidetelstva za izdirvaneto i prouchvaneto na trite Simeonovi nadpisa krai Solun prez 1897–1898', in *Srednovekovniiiat chovek i negoviiat sviat: Sbornik v chest na 70-ta godishnina na prof. d.i.n. Kazimir Popkonstantinov* (Veliko Turnovo, 2014), pp. 825–36.

[58] Popkonstantinov and Kronsteiner, *Altbulgarische*, Table 7, 'Datierte Inschriften'.

[59] See the volume as a whole, to find plenty of individual 'I wrote', invocations, and monastic graffiti. Ibid.

[60] Beshevliev, *Purvobulgarski*, pp. 225–7, n. 71. See also: S. Stancheva, 'Nadgrobniiat nadpis na edin preslavski boliarin ot X v', *Istoricheski Pregled*, 11 (1955), pp. 61–75.

[61] Iordanov, *Korpus na pechatite na srednovekovna Bulgariia* (Sofia, 2001), pp. 31–6 for all twenty-seven surviving seals of Boris, all in Greek; pp. 40–54 for all forty-four surviving seals of Symeon, all in Greek, and pp. 56–66, for all fifty-two Greek seals of Peter. See this is also discussed in: K. Popkonstantinov, 'Greek Inscriptions from Ninth-Tenth Century Bulgaria: A Case Study in Byzantine Epigraphy', in A. Rhoby, ed., *Inscriptions in Byzantium and Beyond: Methods—Projects—Case Studies* (Vienna, 2015), pp. 194–202, at pp. 196–7.

and Nicholas Mystikos with Symeon overwhelm our records, it was not only rulers that were in contact with Byzantium.[62] Nicholas also wrote to the archbishop of Bulgaria and the chief man of Symeon.[63] Theodore Daphnopates also replied to 'those who have written from Bulgaria, to ask whether the body of the Lord is corruptible or incorruptible'.[64] These were presumably Greek-speaking or bilingual clerics who had suddenly become preoccupied with a niche late antique controversy. The letter they received from Daphopates is written in the most tedious Greek. If their question was written in a Greek anywhere near as dense and complex, they must have been very well educated indeed. Doubtless, many more letters were exchanged between middling bureaucrats and clerics. But scholars have been less than willing to make the leap that Greek was probably needed to communicate within the Bulgarian polity too. Greek-language seals of rulers Boris and Symeon have been found in and near Silistra (on the Danube), Varna (Black Sea coast, northern Balkans), Shumen (north-east inland), Debelt (central Black Sea coast), Sliven (central inland), and Plovdiv (south-west inland), well within the confines of the territory of tenth-century Bulgaria.[65] It seems perfectly likely that some if not most were attached to Greek-language letters.

Nor is it the case that the tenth-century evidence points to a clean Greek-state, Slavonic-church divide. The surviving seals pertaining to the church are all in Greek, with one exception, a Slavonic language seal of a monk and *synkellos*, of which six copies survive.[66] Further, the archaeological work of Kazimir Popkonstantinov in the tenth-century monasteries of Ravna and Chernoglavtsi in the north-western Balkans, has shown that Greek continued to be inscribed on church walls.[67] In these two monasteries, in the multilingual and multi-alphabetic graphosphere of Cyrillic, Glagolitic, Greek, and in very few instances Latin, Greek made up the largest group of material on the monastic complex walls, at roughly forty per cent.[68] Many of the inscriptions are of scriptural texts, the Gospel or Psalter, which suggests Greek may have persisted as a liturgical language too.[69] Another corpus

[62] Letters to Symeon: Theodore Daphnopates, *Correspondance*, eds., trans. J. Darrouzes and L. G. Westerink (Paris, 1978), 5–7. Nicholas Mystikos, *Letters*, eds., trans. R. Jenkins and L. Westerink (Washington, DC, 1973), 3–31.

[63] Nicholas Mystikos, *Letters*, archbishop: 4, 12; chief man: 13.

[64] '*πρὸς τοὺς ἀπὸ Βουλγαρίας γράψαντας, εἰ ἄρα φθαρτόν ἐστι τὸ τοῦ Κυρίου σῶμα ἢ ἄφθαρτον*', Theodore Daphnopates, *Correspondance*, 8.

[65] Just an illustrative one seal per place, but many places have several: Iordanov, *Korpus na pechatite*, n. 32 (Silistra); n. 8, n. 30 (Varna); n. 29 (Shumen); n. 12 (Debelt); n. 22 (Sliven); n. 10 (Plovdiv).

[66] Ibid., pp. 78–86, esp. pp. 81–4 for Slavonic. Also published in Popkonstantinov and Kronsteiner, *Altbulgarische*, p. 188, n. 7.

[67] Popkonstantinov, 'Greek Inscriptions from Ninth-Tenth Century Bulgaria', pp. 195–201.

[68] Ibid., p. 196. For the term 'graphosphere', see: S. Franklin, *The Russian Graphosphere, 1450–1850* (Cambridge, 2019), pp. 1–18.

[69] Popkonstantinov, 'Greek Inscriptions from Ninth-Tenth Century Bulgaria', p. 197. Some examples in both Greek and Slavonic can be found here: Popkonstantinov, 'Psaltirni i evagelski tekstove v epigrafski pametnitsi ot srednovekovna Bulgariia', in *Obshtestvo, vlast, istoriia: Sbornik v chest na prof. d-r. Miliiana Kaimakova* (Sofia, 2013), pp. 501–10.

of objects with text which reveal the use of Greek comprises medieval amulets with prayers, scriptural quotations, or incantations. Personal or private piety therefore was also multilingual, as twenty out of the eighty lead amulets of the tenth to eleventh centuries from the Balkans are in Greek.[70] One wonders what other contemporary monastic complexes, as of yet unexcavated or not preserved, might show.

It is only in the last few decades that Popkonstantinov has pointed, albeit in brief, to the implications of these findings: namely, the existence of local Greek literacy and education, rather than travel to study in Constantinople or Byzantium more generally as had previously been assumed.[71] But the assumption is still that Slavs are learning Greek. Yet literacy has to be acquired no matter the native tongue of a person. Further, in the ninth- and tenth-century Balkans, it is by no means clear that Slavonic was a 'vernacular' in the Western medieval sense of the word any more than Greek was, or how it related to what remained of the Turkic language of the Bulgar tribe.[72] It is not certain that Greek was a language one had to learn whereas Slavonic was a mother tongue, as Latin was with respect to English in Anglo-Saxon England.[73] I posit that the seven bilingual inscriptions in the *Altbulgarische Inschriften*, together with the corpus of Greek-only texts on walls and objects in multilingual graphospheres, point to a much more ethnically complex and multilingual environment than we have formerly assumed in the monastic complexes of the early medieval Balkans.[74]

It is precisely in this social space—the monastic complexes of multilingual cohabitation, Greek-to-Slavonic translation, but also the continued use of Greek—that I situate *On Letters*. It need not be that *On Letters* was written in Ravna or Chernoglavtsi in particular. But I argue that it certainly emerged from that kind of place, where Greek-language education was carried out with the exact texts the author of *On Letters* manipulates in narrating the history of Greek: the *Art of Grammar* and its various scholia.

The author of *On Letters* was utilising content available to and shared by a monastic literate class and demonstrating mastery of this material through manipulation. What they produced was an antidote to Greek-language education, presenting a carefully crafted case against Graeco-philia, which cannot be reduced

[70] Ibid., p. 198. K. Popkonstantinov, 'The Letter of Abgar on a Tenth-Century Amulet', in K. Grunberg and W. Potthoff, eds., *Ars Philologica: Festschrift Baldur Panzer* (Vienna, 1999), pp. 649–54.

[71] Popkonstantinov, 'Greek Inscriptions from Ninth-Tenth Century Bulgaria', p. 198.

[72] This Turkic survives in two inscriptions, most likely from the ninth century. Beshevliev, *Purvobulgarski*, nn. 53–4, pp. 186–90.

[73] For an excellent exposition of the circumstances in the West, where Latin was a hegemonic, but non-native tongue and vernacular literacies offered opportunities for subversion and resistance, see: M. Amsler, *Affective Literacies: Writing and Multilingualism in the Late Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2011), esp. pp. 1–71.

[74] Popkonstantinov and Kronsteiner, *Altbulgarischen*, pp. 129, 141, 153, 181, 187, 215, 219.

to Byzantino-philia. It is precisely due to this, that even as the author dismisses Greek, they make efforts to insist that a large number of Slavonic letters are based upon it. Greek is the barometer against which Slavonic's legitimacy must be judged, as the audience I propose was learned precisely in its grammar and history. *On Letters* seeks to divide these bilingual monastic brothers into Greek and Slavonic bookmen, by promoting the consolidation of distinction with enough aggression to suggest this distinction was not clear, and by defending the stability of a literary tradition which was by no means secure.

This narrow milieu of a learned, bilingual clerical or monastic set also best explains the profound absence of missionary sentiment in the treatise. Unlike the other texts discussed above, which preface gospels or other key theological translations, *On Letters* does not discuss conversion as an issue of contemporary concern, nor does it defend Slavonic using the stock phrases of the New Testament found in the *VC* and *VM*. This is not about the spreading of the word, or about the right of all peoples to praise God in different languages. The treatise has a very narrow set of concerns, namely: to establish that the language history of Greek, as it can be found in Greek-language sources, necessitates the devaluing of the Greek language. This is done through close analysis, choice selection, and gentle subversion of Greek-language materials.

This is not an outward-facing text. It does not speak to a flock of converts, nor does it face Byzantium, or Rome. Rather, what is unique about the text is that, in the extremity of its position, it is arguably the first text written in Slavonic which can reveal insight into contestation about the Slavonic alphabet and its use *within* the community of Slavonic speakers. The *VC* defends missionary multilingualism within a Byzantine discourse on Hellenic education; the *VM* defends the Moravian Slavonic mission with an appeal to papal precedent and a personal relationship between Methodios and the Slavs. There is no sense in either of these texts that the Slavonic speakers may not be united in their enthusiasm about the Slavonic alphabet. Rather their support, in both texts, is taken as an unfaltering given.

On Letters reveals what I argue to be the earliest evidence for internal disagreement among users of Slavonic, as to the need and use of a Slavonic alphabet. As such it marks a key turning point in our ability to study an actual, active intellectual culture within a Slavonic-speaking milieu, on the question of alphabet-invention. The position that the text attacks was clearly not totally hegemonic, as texts in Slavonic were commissioned at court. But as shown, even a brief analysis of other contemporary texts, including those associated with the court of Symeon, reveals that the works of John the Exarch and the Gospel Annunciations contain the premises which *On Letters* does not share, such as an explicit concern about translating scriptural texts. The treatise was clearly more purist in its support for Slavonic than even some of its contemporary Greek-to-Slavonic translators.

Conclusions

Ideas about the Slavonic alphabet were made and remade, the alphabet was invented and reinvented, transformed, and contested as it travelled from Central Europe to the Balkans. The arguments of the *VC* and *VM* as I have presented them in this book, were to some extent unsuccessful. The *VC* never made it back into Byzantine intellectual culture, and Cyril never made it into the Greek Synaxarion. His legend was reworked instead for a local Moravian-papal agenda, as it is found in the *VM*. But in this case too, the declaration of papal support and legitimacy, was unsuccessful, as the mission lost the patronage of the pope and local ruler. The alphabet arrived in the early medieval Balkans, therefore, through a series of accidents or failures. And in the Balkans, in one particular kind of milieu, the questions surrounding the Slavonic alphabet were not ones of missionary activity, or local patronage. These were superseded by a much more specific and academic debate about the use and necessity of Slavonic in direct comparison only with Greek, in a set of local circumstances of ethnic and linguistic fluidity which had good reason to tend towards resistance to Slavonic.

The large body of translations datable to the tenth century in Bulgaria may suggest that on this matter, the position of *On Letters*, its reading of Cyril and the sanctity of Slavonic, was successful: that Slavonic won out in the end. Yet there is a serious problem with the survival of our Slavonic texts. Overwhelmingly preserved in manuscripts of East Slavonic redaction from Rus or Muscovy, these texts made it north. But what did not?[75] The availability of Greek-language manuscripts, copied or written in the Balkans during the tenth century, will remain a known unknown, and this asks us to retain doubts about the victory of the case against Greek found in *On Letters* in the tenth-century Balkans. Could the short burst of imperial patronage for translations under Symeon have served as a distraction from the monastic complexes elsewhere that remained multilingual or predominantly literate in Greek regardless of their inhabitants' backgrounds? The fact that Greek made up such a large share of the epigraphic material in monasteries like Ravna and Chertnoglavtsi, ought to give us pause.[76]

[75] Knowledge and availability of the Greek language was significantly rarer in Rus than it was in the Balkans, even if it was not as rare as Francis Thomson's fatalistic assessment concludes. This alone offers good reasons as to why Greek-language manuscripts from the Balkans may not have been transmitted *en masse*. For the extreme case that aside from Hilarion of Kiev, no Rus author 'reveals any acquaintance with Byzantine works in the original Greek', see: Thomson, 'The Intellectual Silence of Russia', p. xi. For more nuanced takes acknowledging some borrowing of Greek words into East Slavonic, and the continued albeit limited use of Greek in Rus on icon-labels and coins, see: I. Ševčenko, 'To Call a Spade or the Etymology of *Rogalije*', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 19 (1995), pp. 608–26; S. Franklin, 'Greek in the Kievan Rus', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 46 (1992), pp. 69–81.

[76] Popkonstantinov, 'Greek Inscriptions from Ninth-Tenth Century Bulgaria', p. 196.

Conclusions

This book has sought to nuance and complicate a scholarly narrative of relative simplicity: that the Slavonic alphabet was created by the efforts of two holy apostles to the Slavs and preserved by the Bulgarians. What I offer instead, through intellectual-historical analysis, is an exposition of a series of arguments about Slavonic, which were made over the course of the late ninth and tenth centuries, as responses to and as attempts to influence fluctuating sociopolitical circumstances. Approaching the alphabet and texts in the way I have proposed in this book makes two important and novel interventions.

In the first instance, this book has sought to contribute to the reassessment of the various nationalist and intra-nationalist common-senses which have dominated the medieval history of Central and Eastern Europe. This reassessment is largely in its infancy, but it has come in two main forms. The first has been the attempt to complicate ideas about how identity manifests itself on the ground, both in the past and present.[1] The second has been through an analysis of the role of nationalism in scholarship on the Middle Ages from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[2] Both of these have informed my approach, and neither has been previously applied specifically to the study of the invention of the alphabet. This may be in part because the alphabet is often seen as a source of inter-national unity rather than nationalised difference. But as demonstrated in this book, Cyril and Methodios are always already nationalised, whether in each local state celebration, or in scholarly disputes over their ethnicity, intentions, or commitments to the Slavs. I maintain that medieval history is deeply entwined with the self-fashioning of contemporary Central and Eastern European nation-states, and as such I have proposed a model for the study of the medieval Central and Eastern European world, which is attuned to and critical of this significance.

In the second instance, I show that at each of the three stages discussed in this book Slavonic was invented anew. In Chapters 1–3, the invention of Slavonic

[1] See: L. Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge, MA, 2004); W. Pohl and H. Reimitz, eds., *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities, 300–800* (Leiden, 1998); S. Plokhy, *The Origins of Slavic Nations: Premodern Identities in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus* (Cambridge, 2006).

[2] See: D. Mishkova, ed., *We, the People: Politics of National Peculiarity in Southeastern Europe* (Budapest, 2009); D. Dzino, 'From Byzantium to the West: "Croats and Carolingians" as a Paradigm-Change in the Research of Early Medieval Dalmatia', in Dzino et al., eds., *Migration, Integration and Connectivity on the Southeastern Frontier of the Carolingian Empire* (Leiden, 2018), pp. 17–31; P. Geary and G. Klaniczay, eds., M*anufacturing Middle Ages: Entangled History of Medievalism in Nineteenth Century Europe* (Leiden, 2013).

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appears as the feather to a philosopher-monk's cap, in a text engaged in discourse about mission and education. In Chapters 4–6, it was ethnicised, attached firmly to the Slavs, and in turn, to Methodios, as the relationship between the two became the clinching argument for Moravian episcopal legitimacy in the face of the legalistic discourse of Frankish religious hegemony. It was only in Chapters 7–9, in the tenth-century Balkans, that the invention of the alphabet became a central issue of concern, at the heart of a learned, bilingual milieu. As such it became generalised and mythologised as an event in the universal history of the Slavs. It was weaponised against Greek and, as I argue, against some resistance to the adoption of the Slavonic alphabet in the Balkans within what were most probably monastic learned communities of translation.

The implications of revealing that the alphabet continued to be contested and reinvented are twofold. The first is to reveal the vibrant intellectual culture to which these texts attest. This culture of contestation is often lost in the traditional narratives of continuity and general agreement between medieval actors about the significance of the alphabet. The intellectual world revealed by these texts was produced by interaction with scribal traditions in Greek and Latin, and by the restless agency of authors and their textual communities, eager to utilise these scribal traditions to their own ends. Throughout, I show how the scribal cultures of Greek and Latin were no more monolithic and unified than that of Slavonic. The authors of our texts often found the tools they required already available in these corpora: whether that be an early Latin missionary hagiographic model which elevates the authority of the pope, or an early Christian text against Hellenism. By demonstrating how deeply intertwined the texts at the heart of this book were with Byzantium and the Frankish world, I hope to destabilise the essential and assumed 'Slavonic-ness' of my texts and equally the 'Byzantine-ness' or 'Frankish-ness' of the cultural production of Byzantium and the Frankish world respectively. As a contribution to the slightly older field of medieval intellectual history and the relatively recent field of Byzantine intellectual history, this book is by no means an exhaustive survey of this field of intellectual production.[3] It hopes, rather, that it will stimulate further work concerned with the complex intellectual life in the cultural borderlands between Rome and Constantinople.

The second purpose of revealing the contestation of Slavonic has been to show that it is possible to use the intellectual arguments of our texts to explore whether and how they sought to affect the immediate sociopolitical circumstances from which they emerged. Or, in other words, to use the competing 'figures of memory' found in our narratives to gain insight into the social history of early writing. I have argued in the first part of this book that the *VC* was primarily an intellectual

[3] See: A. Kaldellis and N. Siniossoglou, eds., *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2017).

exercise, engaging with Constantinopolitan discourses about education and missionary activity. In Chapter 3, I showed that these discourses had recently been materialised and politicised in the figures of Photios and Ignatios, but that the *VC*'s position seems to intentionally avoid explicitly engaging with this political conflict. Rather the *VC* seeks to sidestep it altogether, with an example in the form of the life of Constantine-Cyril. By contrast, in Chapters 6 and 9, I have argued that it is in fact possible to gain some insight into the fragile sociopolitical realities our authors sought to affect through a close study of texts and their intellectual contexts. This has been done thanks to the methodological distinctions proposed at the start of this book between the 'ideal audience' proposed by each text, and the material audience or milieu likely to have received it. In Chapter 6, this sociopolitical context has been long accepted by scholars as the Moravian episcopate's struggle with the Franks and the pope. But I have sought to show that a text-led inquiry offers the opportunity to significantly expand our understanding of the Moravian position. It does so by pointing, as I have done, to the specific sets of arguments posed against the Moravian milieu by Frankish authorities, and to the specific local significance of hagiography as a genre in the relations between the late ninth-century papacy and the Carolingian polities. Lastly, in Chapter 9, I posit a new reading of *On Letters*, as a text situated in the monastic centres of the early medieval Balkans. I argue on the basis of textual, epigraphic, and sigillographic analysis that this was a sociopolitical space of multiple identities and bilingualism. And moreover, that the complexity of this space has been masked previously by essentialist understandings of the relationship between language and identity. Throughout this book, I have sought to make a case for my method as much as for my findings.

In addition to its content and method, this book has also sought to contribute to the wider field of the history of early writing. It was the theoretical advancements of this field, in particular the 'ideological model' for writing, that framed my inquiry. But the example of the invention of Slavonic, which has remained out of touch with this field altogether, can offer some important insight into the scholarship on early writing. As outlined in the Introduction, studies of early writing come in two types. The first type is studies of the mythical narratives of the origin of script, which as Lurie notes are 'highly ideological depictions of a particular kind of idealized contemporary literacy rather than attempts to confront the emergence of something new in the distant past'.[4] The second type is studies of what has been termed the pragmatics of writing, the spread of inscriptions, manuscripts, charters, or the levels of literacy of groups or individuals.[5]

[4] D. Lurie, 'Parables of Inscription: Some Notes on the Narratives of the Origin of Writing', *History and Theory*, 56 (2018), pp. 32–49, at p. 33.

[5] See: E. MacArthur, 'The Conception and Development of the Egyptian Writing System', in C. Woods, ed., *Visible Language: Inventions of Writing in the Ancient Middle East and Beyond* (Chicago, 2015), pp. 115–36; J. Palka, 'The Beginnings of Maya Writing', in ibid., pp. 225–31; M. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England, 1066–1307* (London, 1979); I. Larsson, *Pragmatic Literacy and the Medieval Use of the Vernacular: The Swedish Example* (Turnhout, 2009); Đ. Bubalo, *Pragmatic Literacy in Medieval Serbia* (Turnhout, 2014).

Precisely due to the temporal proximity of the invention of the alphabet and the emergence of a series of contesting narratives around it, the case study of Slavonic demonstrates how these two strands interact: how authors and their textual communities' ideas about writing engaged with the sociopolitical spheres which permitted, policed, or promoted the literacy. I argue that this engagement was productive: it kept producing new stories and claims to the alphabet and its creators, rather than reifying one origin story about a distant past, as is the case with Egyptian, Sumerian, or Japanese writing.[6] In consequence, and perhaps somewhat paradoxically, when it comes to the origins of script, the more recent the invention, the more contested its origins.

Whilst I have sought to present a diachronic study of three historically-specific claims for and to the Slavonic alphabet, it is by no means the case that this book seeks to propose a history of neat, linear progress or development. To the contrary, each of the new inventions of Slavonic did not supersede or replace the former. These conflicting arguments about the alphabet coexisted in the intellectual world of medieval Slavonic. The author of *On Letters* may well have had access to both versions of the invention narrative, as presented in the *VC* and *VM*, or through more diffuse channels of hymns, homilies, or oral tradition. By the eleventh century all three arrived in early Rus, and one of the opening entries of the earliest Rus chronicle, the *Tale of Bygone Years* ('Povest' vremennykh let'), records the invention of Slavonic.[7] It is once again a foundational moment, yet this time for a new polity, in a new place and time.

Doubtless, this process of reinvention continued up until and beyond the earliest manuscripts recording the narratives of the alphabet invention discussed in this book. In many of these instances, it is difficult to establish what the act of recording these texts meant to those recording them. And some of these lacunae require further study, foremost of which is the all-but disappearance of Cyril and Methodios in the late medieval Balkans and early Muscovy. But in some cases, we can see glimpses into the later receptions, inventions, and reinventions of stories about the alphabet. Such stories have begun to be the focus of scholarship, with fascinating recent insight into Cyrillo-Methodian receptions in early modern Latin liturgy, the short-lived push for a pan-Slavonic Cyril and Methodios in Bulgarian socialist historiography, and the surge in Cyrillo-Methodian veneration in Slovakia after 1989.[8]

[6] Plato, *Phaedrus and the Seventh and Eighth Letters*, trans. W. Hamilton (London, 1973), pp. 96–7; C. Woods, 'The Earliest Mesopotamian Writing', in his ed., *Visible Language*, pp. 33–50; Lurie, 'Parables of Inscription', pp. 33–8.

[7] *Tale of Bygone Years*, in *Povest' Vremennykh Let*, eds. V. P. Adrianova-Peretts and D. S. Likhachev (St Petersburg, 1996, rev. M. B. Sverdlov), pp. 15–16.

[8] See: S. Burlieva, *Cyrillo-Methodiana & Varia Medievalia: Pametnitsite na kirilo-metodievskata traditsiia* (Sofia, 2019), especially the section on the Latin liturgical tradition. D. Neydenova, 'Kirilometodievoto delo i suzdavaneto na istoricheska pamet v sotsialisticheska Bulgariia', in *Jazyk a kultúra v slovanských súvislostiach Kliment Ochridský a jeho prínos pre slovanskú a európsku kultúru (k 1100. výročiu jeho smrti)* (Bratislava, 2017), pp. 137–56. M. Nemčíková et al., 'Sv. Cyril a Metod a ich reflexia v krajine Slovenska', *Konštatínove listy*, 13 (2020), pp. 224–36.

Yet so much remains to be done on this topic because it continues to produce historical material at a relentless pace. The Slavonic alphabet and the legacy of Cyril and Methodios continue to be reinvented and reconstituted through their celebration and contestation in the modern world. Often, the characters of these modern stories are strikingly similar to our medieval actors: the Slavonic alphabet is still of concern to popes, patriarchs, and political leaders and it still continues to hold conflicting meanings for each. Understanding these concerns remains crucial for our understanding of both the scholarship on the medieval texts and the texts themselves.

It has been the purpose of this study to cause some disruption, to offer its own, new narrative of the process of inventing Slavonic, and, as it does so, to invent Slavonic anew. But it has also sought, through its method, to open up new avenues of research into an old topic, which precisely due to its immense contemporary significance for too long has been shaped by a narrow set of concerns.

I wish to close this book therefore with another beginning. What follows is a precis of some recent events which form another episode in the continued contestation of the legacy of Slavonic, and which could fit just as nicely in our medieval sources as they do in our present day.

Epilogue: Pseudo-Cyrilo-Methodiana Continuatus

In the first week of May 2019, Pope Francis was preparing for his visits to the Republic of Bulgaria and North Macedonia. This was to be the first time in seventeen years a pope had visited Bulgaria, and the first-ever papal visit to North Macedonia. His mission was to stress an ecumenical message to two overwhelmingly Orthodox countries with tiny Catholic minorities. This was part of the Vatican's wider push and long-term agenda for the eventual reunification of the churches that split in 1054.

The pope had to tread carefully, however, due to the complex situation of both countries' Orthodox churches. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church is known for its hard-line approach to Catholicism and refusal to attend the meetings of Catholic–Orthodox dialogue. It made a public statement in advance that it would not take part in any services the pope led in Bulgaria and distanced itself from his invitation. Meanwhile, the Macedonian Orthodox Church declared itself autocephalous from the Serbian Orthodox Church in 1967, and has since been considered in schism by the Orthodox world. Meeting privately with its prelate, or leading a service with him, would have caused upset to other Orthodox churches, including the Bulgarian, as it would legitimise what is perceived to be an illegitimate church.

To navigate these rough waters, the pope and his team prepared for a number of concessional manoeuvres. Pope Francis agreed to hold an open-air, non-denominational service in Bulgaria so as not to displease the Orthodox patriarch

of the country, and not to meet with the North Macedonian prelate in private, so as not to offend the rest of the Orthodox world. He also, much like the medieval actors at the heart of this book, decided to publish texts, in their modern multimedia iteration: he recorded customary public greetings to the peoples of each country, which were then screened and published in their respective national media and the pope's own various accounts and channels.

These texts were intended to endear the people and sceptical church leaders to the pope, by stressing how the papacy and the Christianities of the Balkan region have more in common than that which divides them. In each instance, therefore, the pope made an authorial decision not too dissimilar to those discussed in Chapter 6; he turned to an aspect of each country's Christian history, which had some bearing on Rome, to praise and celebrate. In his message to the people of North Macedonia he turned to recent history. He said he would entrust his trip to the intercession of Mother Teresa, or St Teresa of Calcutta, who was born in Skopje and canonised by Pope Francis himself in 2016.[9]

In his message to the Bulgarians he turned to what seemed, at its surface, more ancient history. He praised the country's territory as 'homeland of witnesses of the faith, since the time in which the Holy Brothers Cyril and Methodius sowed the Gospel there'.[10] This message may appear relatively inoffensive, but it is steeped in the papacy's own politicisation of the two brothers. In his Apostolic Letter *Egregiae virtutis*, dated 31 December 1980, Pope John Paul II had named the brothers co-patron saints of Europe, in an explicitly political attempt to reach out to churches beyond the Iron Curtain, and more specifically to find common ground with the Orthodox world. Inevitably, invoking the brothers, for Pope Francis therefore was also invoking the papacy's own long-term agenda for unification. This was strengthened further by the pope's actions on the ground in Bulgaria. On 5 May, only a few hours after his arrival in Bulgaria and after his meeting with the president, prime minister and civil servants, the pope performed a prayer alone (once again, so as to not displease the patriarch) before the shrine of Cyril and Methodios in the modern cathedral seat of the Bulgarian patriarchate, the temple-monument of Knyaz Alexander-Nevski. This silent prayer, which lasted over forty minutes, was filmed and has over 14,000 views on YouTube at the time of writing.[11] If only one had such data about the reach of the *VC*.

[9] 'Pope Francis Sends Greetings to North Macedonia', 4 May 2019, https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2019–05/pope-francis-north-macedonia-video-message.html (last accessed: September 2023).

[10] 'patria dei testimoni della fede fin dai tempi in cui i santi fratelli Cirillo e Metodio disseminato il Vangelo', D. Watkins, 'Pope Francis Sends Greetings to Bulgaria Ahead of Visit', 3 May 2019, https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2019–05/pope-francis-apostolic-journey-bulgaria-video-message.html (Last accessed: September 2023).

[11] Vatican News, 'Pope Francis—Sofia—Prayer before the Throne of Saints Cyril and Methodius-Regina Coeli 2019-05-05', YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=csAyB4nznjU&t=300s (last accessed: September 2023).

What the brothers mean to the papacy however is at odds with their nationalised celebration across the Slavonic world. This much must have become clear to the pope himself, as on the day of his private prayer in Sofia and a day before his arrival to North Macedonia, he was slammed by Macedonian media for 'erasing' Macedonia and wrongly placing Cyril and Methodios in Bulgaria.[12]

This all feels rather familiar: apostolic letters, diplomatic visits, rulers, patriarchs, and the politicised uses of ancient history to smooth over contemporary political problems. All would have their place in the ninth century or the twenty-first. But there is one more aspect to this dispute that I wish to draw out, one which connects the ninth and twenty-first centuries ever more closely, and which will hopefully make this monograph's purpose appear most clearly. And that is that both the events of the ninth and twenty-first centuries have a worrisome disinterest in concrete details and close textual analysis.

Pope Francis' message performs a number of authorial manoeuvres. First and foremost, he repeats one of the truisms I have shown to be invented by the *VM*: namely that the holy brothers Cyril and Methodios were an inseparable unit on a divine mission. Secondly, in his celebration of Cyril and Methodios, there is a clear and intentional amnesia of the papacy's abolition of the use of Slavonic in 890, and later anathematisation of Methodios by the Synod of Split in 1061. And finally, the pope adds an innovation to the history of Slavonic: and that is the idea that Cyril and Methodios themselves spread the Gospel in Bulgaria. This upset the Macedonian media for erasing their own country. Yet the facts remain, that nowhere in our early accounts of the invention do Cyril and Methodios go to the territory of either modern country. They only do so, in fact, in much later, and often apocryphal or otherwise problematic sources. Cyril supposedly goes directly to the Bulgarians from Cappadocia in the confused and apocryphal *Thessalonian Legend* (probably ca. twelfth century) and Methodios supposedly christens Boris in Theophylact of Ochrid's post-1054 attempt to re-Byzantinise the brothers in his *Life of Clement*. So, what was the pope reading? What was this message trying to do? Why did the pope try to please the Bulgarians at what he must have been informed would be the expense of displeasing the Macedonians?

There is no dramatic last note to the history of the Slavonic alphabet: as you are reading this, somewhere, somehow the alphabet and its legacy continue to be reinvented. The need for new critical histories of these acts remains as urgent as ever.

[12] 'Papata Frantsicko gi "izbrisha" Kiril i Metodij od Makedonija i gi zapisha vo Bugarija', 5 May 2019, https://republika.mk/vesti/makedonija/papata-francisk-gi-izbrisha-kiril-i-metodij-od-makedonija-i-gi-zapisha-vo-bugarija/ (last accessed: September 2023).

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